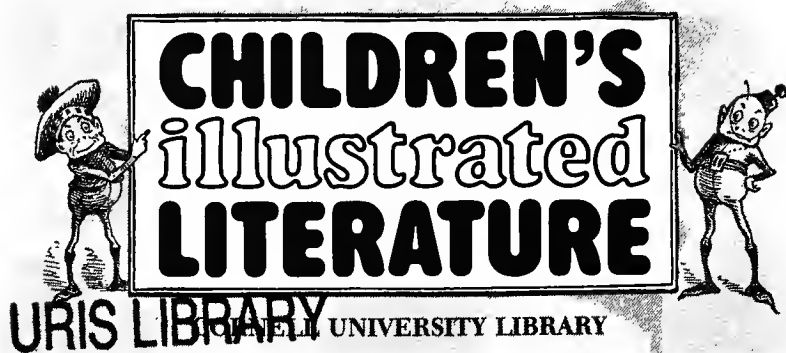




TYLTYL

By Maurice
Maeterlinck

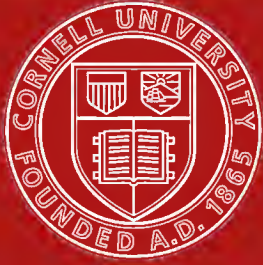
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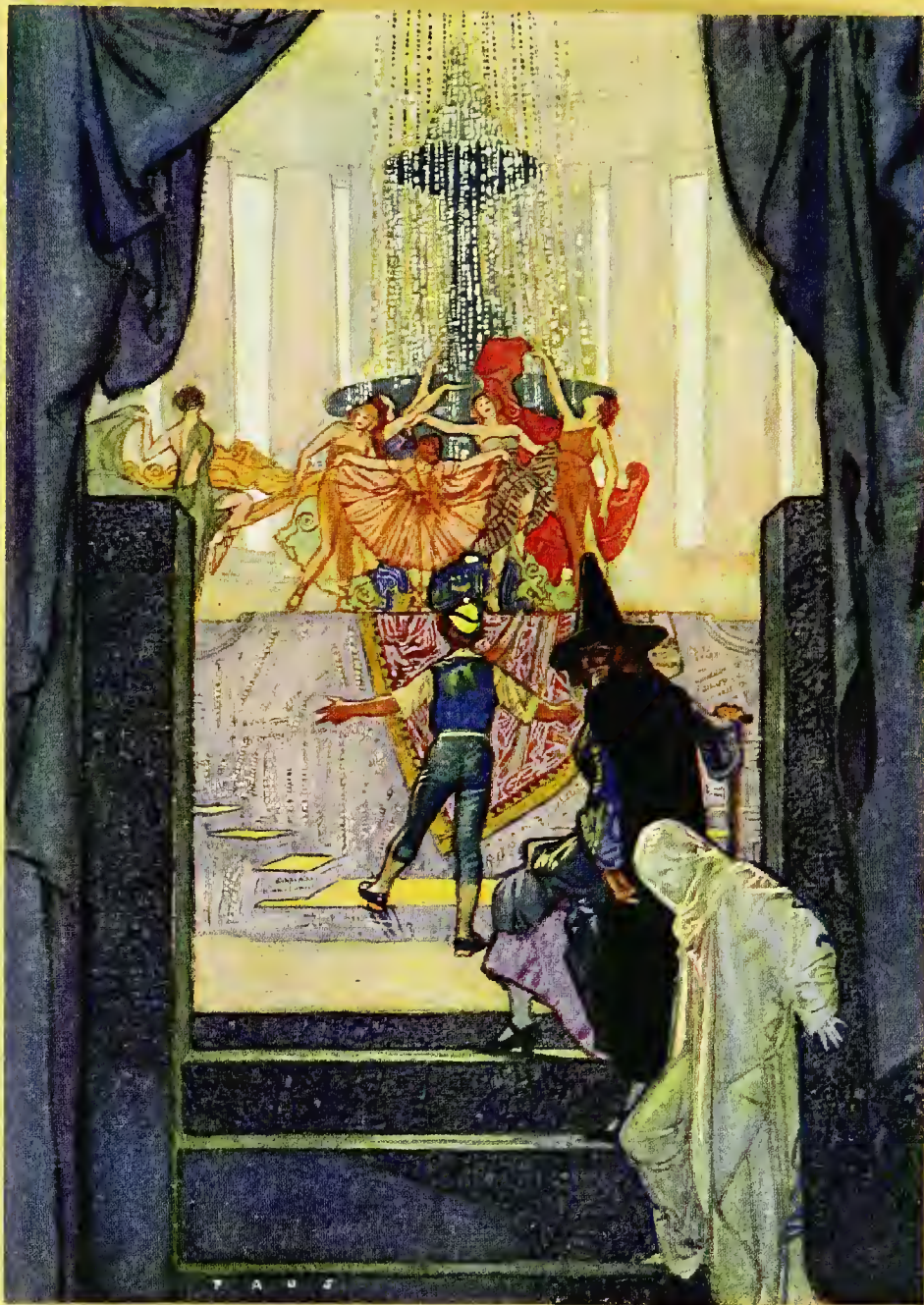
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TYLTYL



UNDER THE DAZZLING ARCHES THE SIX GIRLS MOVED TO AND FRO,
ARRAYED IN RESPLENDENT, TRAILING GOWNS *Page 71*

TYLTYL

*Being the Story of
Maurice Maeterlinck's Play,
"The Betrothal,"
Told for Children*

BY
ALEXANDER TEIXEIRA DE MATTOS

ILLUSTRATED BY
HERBERT PAUS



NEW YORK
DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY
1920

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THE WOODCUTTER'S COTTAGE

TYLTYL

CHAPTER I

THE WOODCUTTER'S COTTAGE

YOU must all have read, in *The Children's Blue Bird*, how once upon a time, on Christmas Eve, the Fairy Bérylune came and roused Tyltyl and Mytyl, the woodcutter's little boy and girl, from their beds and took them for a long journey, or rather quite a lot of journeys, in search of the Blue Bird, which stands for happiness. You will remember how, accompanied by Tylô, the Dog, and Tylette, the Cat, to say nothing of the souls of Sugar, Bread and Milk and of Fire and Water and Light, they visited all sorts of strange places: the Fairy's palace, first; next, the Land of Memory, where they found their dead grandfather and grandmother, Gaffer and Granny Tyl, and a number of their little dead brothers and sisters; after that,

the palace of Night; and then the Kingdom of the Future, where they saw their own unborn children and grandchildren; and next the temple of Light and other places.

Wherever they went, they just failed to catch the Blue Bird, or, when they did, they were not able to bring him home alive. But, when they were back again, they found him in their own home, where happiness always resides; and Tyltyl gave him to the little daughter of their neighbour, old Madame Berlingot, who turned out to be no other than the Fairy Bérylune herself!

Well, in the story which I am now going to tell you, you will see a great deal more of your old friend Tyltyl; just a little of his sister Mytyl and of Daddy Tyl and Mummy Tyl, their father and mother; but nothing at all of the others, except Light, who never deserts the children. On the other hand, I promise that you will be introduced to a great many new and highly interesting persons.

It was Christmas Eve again, but ten years later; and Tyltyl, who was now close upon nineteen years of age and beginning to look upon himself as very nearly a

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man, was lying fast asleep in the kitchen of the woodcutter's cottage, when suddenly a knock at the door woke him with a start.

"Who's there?" he cried.

There was no answer, but just another knock.

"Wait till I put on my breeches," Tyltyl called out. "The door's bolted. I'll come and open it."

"Don't trouble," said a voice behind the door, "don't trouble! It's only me! How do you do?"

And the door opened of itself and in stepped the Fairy Bérylune, large as life. You remember her, don't you? A little old woman, dressed all in green, with a red hood over her head. She was hump-backed and lame; she had only one eye; her nose and chin almost touched; and she walked very, very slowly, leaning on a stick. She was obviously a fairy. You know it and I know it; but somehow Tyltyl didn't. He was just surprised and taken aback by the strange look of her and by a queer brightness which filled the room when the door opened and which remained after it was closed again. And all that Tyltyl did was to ask her who she was.

"Don't you know me?" said the Fairy. "Why, Tyl-

tyl, it's not more than ten years since you and I last said good-bye to each other!"

Tyltyl tried his very hardest to recollect, but all in vain. Then he began to pretend:

"Yes, yes, I remember," he said, "I know what you mean."

But the Fairy saw through him like a shot:

"You don't grasp who I am, though," she said, "and you don't remember anything at all. I see you haven't changed a bit: you're just the same careless, ungrateful, wool-gathering little fellow that you always were! . . . But you've grown taller and stronger, my lad, and quite handsome! If I weren't a fairy, I should never have known you! Yes, you're really quite handsome! . . . But are you aware of it yourself? It doesn't seem to have occurred to you."

"We never had more than one looking-glass in the house," said Tyltyl, "a tiny glass about the size of your hand. And Mytyl took it and keeps it in her room."

"So Mytyl has a room of her own now?" asked the Fairy.

"Yes, she sleeps next door, under the stairs, and I here, in the kitchen. Shall I wake her?"

At this the Fairy suddenly flew into a rage, in the same unreasonable way as on her last visit, when she was always flying into rages:

"There's no need to do anything of the sort!" she cried. "I've nothing to do with Mytyl; her hour hasn't struck; and, when it does strike, I shall be quite capable of finding her, thank you, without being shown the way. Any one would think I was blind! I want nobody's advice . . ."

Tyltyl was terribly frightened at this outburst:

"But, m-ma'am, I d-didn't know," he stammered.

"That'll do," said the Fairy, recovering her temper as suddenly as she had lost it. "By the way," she asked, "how old are you now?"

"I shall be nineteen a fortnight after Epiphany," said Tyltyl.

The Fairy grew cross again:

"A fortnight after Epiphany!" she grunted. "What a way of reckoning your dates! . . . And here am I without my almanack! I left it with Destiny last time I called on him; and that's quite fifty years ago! I simply

don't know where I stand. . . . However, no matter: I'll make the calculation next time I see him, for we shall have to get it exactly right. . . . And what have you been doing all these ten years since we met?"

"I've been working in the forest with daddy," said Tylyl.

"That means," said the Fairy, "you've been helping him cut down trees. I don't like that, I don't like it at all. That's what you call working, is it? Ah, well, men can't live, I suppose, without destroying the last things of beauty left on the earth! Let's talk of something else, if you don't mind."

She dropped her voice and, in a very mysterious tone, asked:

"Can any one hear us?"

"I don't think so."

"It doesn't matter what you think," said the Fairy, growing angry once more, "but whether you're sure. What I have to say to you is tremendously important . . . and strictly private. Come here, come quite close, while I whisper it to you. Whom are you fond of?"

"Whom am I fond of?" Tytyl repeated, in amazement.

"Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes!" screamed the Fairy, still crossly and quite forgetting the importance of speaking in a low voice. "I'm not talking Greek, am I, or double-Dutch? I want to know if you're in love with anybody."

"Yes, certainly," said Tytyl. "I love everybody: my parents, my friends, my sister, the neighbours, all the people I know."

"Now just oblige me," said the Fairy, "and don't play the fool. You know perfectly well what I mean. I'm asking you whether there's any one, any girl among those you meet, whom you love more than the rest."

Tytyl blushed and stopped to consider:

"I don't know," he said.

This made the Fairy angrier than ever:

"What *do* you mean, you don't know? Who *does* know, if you don't? At your age, a boy thinks of these things: if he doesn't, he's a booby and not worth bothering about. . . . There's nothing to blush at, you silly: it's when one's not in love that one ought to feel ashamed.

Out with it! Speak the truth and shame the devil!
Among all the girls you've met . . ."

"I don't meet very many," said Tyltyl, timidly.

"That's no reason," said the Fairy. "It's not necessary to meet them by the dozen. As often as not, it's enough if you come across just one: when you've nobody else, you're fond of that one and you're perfectly happy. But come, among those close by . . ."

"There aren't any close by," said Tyltyl.

"There are daughters at the neighbours'," said the Fairy.

"We have hardly any neighbours," said Tyltyl.

"But there are girls in the village and in the town and way back in the forest and in every house. You find them everywhere, when your heart's awake. . . . Which is the prettiest?"

"Well, they're all very pretty."

"How many do you know?" asked the Fairy.

"Four in the village," Tyltyl answered, "one in the forest and one by the bridge."

"Oho!" said the Fairy. That's not bad for a begin-

ning. You're not the baby one would think. . . . But tell me, quite between ourselves, do they love you too?"

"They haven't told me so," said Tytyl. "They don't know that I'm fond of them."

"But there are things which it isn't necessary to know or tell," said the Fairy. "A look is enough. There is greater truth in one's thoughts and greater truth in one's looks than in spoken words. And there's no mistaking a look. . . . But I'm in a hurry. Would you like me to make them come here?"

Tytyl was horrified at the very thought of it. What on earth was he to do if the Fairy suddenly brought six girls to see him? He had never felt so shy in all his life!

"Make them come here?" he exclaimed. "Why, they won't want to come! They hardly know me. They know I'm poor. They don't know where I live, especially those in the village: they never come this way, never. It's four miles from the church to the house; it's an hour's walk; the roads are very bad; it's very dark . . ."

"Dear, dear, dear, dear!" said the Fairy. "Anything more? I don't want to hear about all that. Please remember, we've done with falsehoods. I've only to lift my finger and they'll come."

"But I'm not even sure that they've noticed me at all," said Tyltyl.

"Have you looked at them?" asked the Fairy.

"Yes . . . sometimes."

"And have they looked back at you?"

"Yes . . . sometimes."

"Well, that's enough," said the Fairy, "that's the truth; and we don't need anything more. You'll find that's the way people tell each other in the world where I'm going to take you, the world of *real* things. The rest doesn't matter. They make no mistake. You'll see, once we are there, how well people know all that has to be known; for what we see is nothing: it's what we do *not* see that makes the world go round. . . . And now, watch me! I'm taking the little green hat out of my bag again. Do you remember it?"

This was the same little green hat that the Fairy made Tyltyl wear when she came to see him before. You,

who have read *The Children's Blue Bird*, will remember it as Tyltyl did.

"Yes," he said, "but it's bigger. . . ."

The Fairy grew angry again: she always did, when Tyltyl said something that struck her as rather stupid; and she exclaimed:

"Of course it's bigger! So's your head: they grew up together. Why must you always make those uncalled-for remarks?"

"And the diamond has changed colour," said Tyltyl, taking no notice this time of her outburst. "I should call it blue."

"But, you see, it's not the diamond!" said the Fairy, sarcastically. "It happens to be a sapphire. This time we're not concerned with the souls of Bread and Sugar and other simple and unimportant things. We have to choose the great and only love of your life; for every man has only one real love. If he misses that, he misses everything. He goes on seeking till he dies, without fulfilling his most important duty. But he doesn't know this himself. He walks along with his eyes shut; marries somebody whom he only thinks he loves; and shows her to all

his friends as proudly as if he had married the right one all the time. He fancies himself alone in the world and imagines that in his own heart all things begin and end. Which, I need hardly tell you, is absurd! . . . But enough of this! Are you ready? Put on your hat and turn the sapphire; then they'll come in."

"But I'm not dressed!" cried Tytyl, quite scared. "Wait! Wait! . . . What shall I put on? . . . Oh, what luck! . . . There are my Sunday clothes on the chair: my breeches—they're almost new—and my clean shirt!"

And he began to scramble into his clothes.

"Come, come," said the Fairy, "have done! All this doesn't matter a bit; they won't mind your clothes. You're not going to meet a pack of silly children. You won't find them the same as they were in the other life, because this is the real one; and it's the truth in them that you're about to see."

Tytyl felt very uneasy, in spite of all that the Fairy said:

"Will they all come in together?" he asked. "There are at least six of them: I can't remember exactly.

Suppose they started quarrelling and pulling one another's hair?"

"I say!" said the Fairy, chuckling. "Aren't you just the least bit conceited?"

"Not at all," said Tyltyl. "But I'm afraid of their making a noise, because of daddy."

"Haven't I told you again and again," said the Fairy, "that we're no longer in the world below! Can't you feel that the air is much purer and the light quite different? Where we now are, people don't quarrel or wish one another harm. All of that was merely make-believe; it doesn't exist deep down. If some of your little friends should be unhappy because you hesitate in your choice, they will none the less hope on until the end; and they know very well that where there is love there must be also some sadness."

"How will they come in?" asked Tyltyl.

"Upon my word, I don't know. Each of them will do what occurs to her: one will choose the window, another the ceiling, the wall, the cellar or the chimney. I dare say one or two will come in by the door; but those are the least interesting: they lack imagination. However,

we shall see when the time comes. We've talked enough; time presses. Come, turn the sapphire."

"Which way round am I to turn it?" asked Tytyl, trying to gain time, for, if the truth be known, he was absolutely terrified.

"The same as with the diamond, from right to left," the Fairy replied.

Then she looked at Tytyl:

"Goodness me," she said, "how pale you are! What has come over you? Surely you're not afraid?"

"Not at all," said he, "on the contrary. I always look like this."

Now this was not true, as you and I know; he was really very much afraid; and the Fairy told him that he need not be ashamed to admit it. After all, it was a most serious moment; he had to choose his bride; and, if men only knew what happened, said the Fairy, both in this life and in the lives of all who came after them, when they made a bad choice, they would never dare to get married at all.

However, she now once more told him to turn the sapphire; and he did so, in fear and trembling. Then

a wonderful thing took place. The whole cottage became filled with a most extraordinary light, which made the commonest things look beautiful and bright and brand-new. Then a window opened, without a sound; and in stepped a young and pretty girl, dressed as a woodcutter might be, in brown homespun, and carrying a hatchet in her hand. She ran straight up to Tytyl and gave him a kiss:

"Good-evening, Tytyl," she said. "You called me; and here I am!"

"Hullo, it's Milette!" said Tytyl. And he introduced her to the Fairy: "This is Milette, my cousin; she is the daughter of Feltree, the woodcutter. We sometimes see each other in the forest, you know." Then, turning to Milette, "So you loved me?" he asked. "You never said so, you know!"

"People don't say those things," said Milette. "There's no need to. But I knew from the first that you were fond of me; and so was I of you. It was one evening when you went past with your father. You were carrying a bundle of laurel-twigs. You didn't know my name at the time and you said, 'Good-evening,' and

looked into my eyes. I answered, 'Good-night,' and cast my eyes down; but I had that look of yours in my heart; and, since then, without leaving home, I have been here very often; only you never seemed to know it."

"No, no," said Tytyl, "it was I who used to go to you, every evening after sunset. I was never at home. Mummy used to ask, 'What are you thinking of, Tytyl?' And daddy would answer, 'He's up in the moon again!' I wasn't in the moon at all, I was at your place; but you paid no attention: you were seeing to the fire, or the soup, or the rabbits; you were cutting up chips or tying up bundles, just as if there was no one in the cottage."

"No, I was here, kissing you all the time; but you never kissed me," said Milette.

"That's where you're wrong," said Tytyl. "It was I that was always kissing you!"

"Isn't it funny," said Milette, laughing, "that we can never see things till we've learnt how to look for them? But, now that we do know, now that we see, we can kiss each other really."

Then Tytyl gave her his first kiss:

"Oh," he said, "how wonderful! I never kissed any

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one till now; and I had no idea what it was like. How wonderful, how wonderful! I could go on kissing you for ever!"

"And I too!" said she. "But tell me, Tylyl, is it true that you love me and only me?"

Before he had time to answer this rather embarrassing question, she gave a start and asked:

"Who's that?"

Millette had seen the wall of the cottage opening wide. Through it there stepped another girl, dressed in a red skirt and bodice. A butcher's knife dangled from her belt. The moment she was inside the cottage, the wall closed behind her.

The newcomer also ran up to Tylyl with a kiss:

"Here I am, Tylyl dear, here I am!" she said.

"This is my cousin Belline, the butcher's daughter," said Tylyl, introducing her to the Fairy. "What's the matter with you, Belline darling?" he asked. "You're wet through and all out of breath."

"I should think I was!" she answered. "It's a long way from the village to where you live. I didn't even wait to wash my hands. I was helping daddy to cut up

a calf; the moment your thoughts came, I dropped my knife and left everything, so as to get here quicker. I cut my finger rather badly, I believe, before I left; but here it doesn't show. Daddy hasn't the least idea what has happened: I expect he's furious. . . . How do you do, Milette?"

"How do you do, Belline? Do you love Tyltyl too?"

"Why, yes, of course I do!" said Belline. "Are you angry with me?"

"Not at all, I'm very glad. We'll both of us love him."

And Belline and Milette began to compliment each other on their looks, so that Tyltyl said to the Fairy:

"They're taking it very well, aren't they?"

"Of course they are," said the Fairy. "They know you can't help it."

The chimney-recess now opened at the back and a third girl entered the cottage. She was dressed like the maid at an inn, with a little white apron on her, and carried a pewter tray under one arm and a bottle under the other. She was a very talkative creature and came in with a rush, crying:

"Here I am, here I am, it's me! Good-evening, everybody! But first let me give Tytyl a kiss."

"Hullo, you too, Roselle?" said Tytyl.

And this one too was introduced to the Fairy:

"Roselle, the daughter of the landlord of the Golden Sun."

Roselle dropped a curtsy and the Fairy made a bow.

"Was there no one at the inn, this evening?" asked Tytyl, "that you were able to come?"

"On the contrary," said Roselle. "Heaps and heaps of people! You can imagine, on Christmas Eve, of all nights! There were men sitting and drinking on the counter and on the tables and on all the window-sills. When you called me, I let a tray fall with twelve glasses on it. Why, I've still got the tray under this arm and a bottle of the best brandy under the other. It gets in my way when I'm kissing you. . . . I left the people shouting after me as though I had set the house on fire. They must be wondering if I'm mad. But I don't care, I was so delighted that you were thinking of me. I suddenly felt so happy! . . . And how are you, Tytyl, dear?"

Kiss me again. You're even handsomer than when I saw you last."

"And you too, dear Roselle," said Tyltyl, kissing her as she had asked him to, "you are prettier than ever. I never dared kiss you before."

"Nor I you, though I often wanted to," said Roselle. "Do you remember the first time you came to the inn, six weeks ago? You didn't look at anybody; but suddenly, when I came near, your eyes grew brighter and opened, oh, ever so wide!"

"And so did yours open wide," said Tyltyl. "They looked like two great, shining lakes."

"What happened, to make our eyes go like that?" asked Roselle. "I know that, since that day, I think of nothing but you, I do no work, I'm always here; but you very seldom come to us."

Before Tyltyl had time to assure her that she was mistaken, a sound was heard up above; and down the ladder leading from the attic came yet another girl, the fourth. This one was dressed in a long smock and all covered with flour. Tyltyl turned round briskly:

"Who's there?" he asked. "You, Aimette? This,"

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he said to the Fairy, "is another cousin, Aimette, the miller's daughter."

"You seem to be doing very nicely," said the Fairy, chaffingly.

"I came as I was, from the mill," said Aimette. "I've not had time to brush myself down."

"That doesn't matter," said Tytyl. "Kiss me all the same. How fresh and rosy you are, under all that flour!"

"Oh, but I daren't!" said Aimette. "You'd be covered with it."

But she kissed him for all that.

Aimette had hardly finished speaking when a fifth girl came through the other window, a girl wearing neither shoes nor stockings and nothing on her head. She was dressed in rags and tatters and carried a wooden bowl with a few halfpence clinking in it. She stood where she was, looking very timid and not daring to come forward.

"Here's one more!" said Tytyl to the Fairy. "This is Jalline, the little beggar-girl from the bridge."

"Excellent, excellent!" said the Fairy, poking fun at

him as before. "Hadn't I better wake your father and tell him that the house won't be big enough to hold them all? Then he can start building at once."

"But it's not my fault," said Tyltyl. "I'm not doing it on purpose. One can't help loving them! . . . How are you, Jalline? What have you done with your poor old father?"

"I left him at the bridge."

"What, all alone in the dark! And he blind and a cripple! Isn't that very dangerous?"

"Yes, I know it's wrong," said Jalline, almost bursting into tears. "It was very wrong of me, very. I won't do it again. But I couldn't help it, Tyltyl, really. When you called me, I just *had* to come!"

"There, there," said Tyltyl, kissing her, "don't cry. I'll help you bring him home. . . . Do you remember, I did so once before, one evening when I was crossing the bridge and gave you a halfpenny: it was the last I had."

"I've kept it ever since, Tyltyl," she said. "I put it in a box, I shall never lose it."

And now the door opened, slowly. A sixth girl walked in. She was a very grand young lady, in evening-dress,

with a fur cloak over her shoulders and an ostrich-feather fan in her hand.

"Who's this?" asked Tytyl, not recognizing her at once. "Why, it's Rosarelle! . . . The mayor's daughter! . . . You know," he said, turning to the Fairy, "the one from the great big farmhouse, with the three round turrets, beyond the village. What shall I do, what shall I do? She's so proud!"

"Not a bit of it," said the Fairy. "She won't be any prouder than the rest of them. You just try her. Speak to her and see."

"I'd never dare to," said Tytyl. "What could I say?"

But Rosarelle saved him the trouble by coming forward herself and asking:

"Tytyl, don't you know me?"

"Yes, miss, but I wasn't sure."

"Miss?" she repeated. "What do you mean? That's not my name. My name's Rosarelle; and you know it. . . . There was a big dinner-party at my father's for Christmas. Your thoughts came to fetch me while we were at dessert. I jumped up at once and upset a glass of champagne. They were frightened and thought I was

ill and began to fuss: it was as much as I could do to get away. Still, here I am; and I'm going to give you a kiss."

And she did so. Then she went on:

"Do you remember how we used to look at each other when you came to the yard with your bundles of wood?"

"Oh, yes!" said Tytyl. "You were so lovely, I simply couldn't take my eyes off you. But you're lovelier than ever to-day."

"That was the beginning of it," said Rosarelle, "but I didn't quite realize it all until the day when you gave me those three little bullfinches which you found in the forest."

"Yes, yes, I remember," said Tytyl. "I knew it too that day. . . . Are they still alive?"

"Two of the little things are dead, but the third is splendid. I keep him in a gilt cage, by the window; and each time he sings . . ."

I suppose Rosarelle was going to tell Tytyl that each time the bullfinch sang it reminded her of him; but the Fairy interrupted her:

"Come, come, these little confidences are very interest-

ing," she said, in her sarcastic way, "but we have no time to lose. Everything must be settled to-night; for a chance like this comes only once to a man; and woe to him who lets it slip: he will never have another! What we have to do now is to put our heads together and prepare for the great choice, which is to decide the happiness of two people first and of many others afterwards."

This upset Tytyl terribly:

"Must I make my choice at once," he asked, "and can I choose only one?"

"Don't distress yourself," said the Fairy. "It's not your affair. You won't have to choose."

"I sha'n't have to choose?" exclaimed Tytyl, utterly bewildered.

"Why, no, it doesn't concern you," said the Fairy.

Tytyl was completely staggered:

"It doesn't concern me?" he repeated.

"No, no, I told you so before: of course it doesn't."

Not a word of what she said did Tytyl understand:

"Do you mean to say that I can't love whom I want to?" he asked.

"Why, no," said the Fairy. "Nobody loves whom he

wants to, or does what he wants to, in this world. You must first of all learn what is wanted by those on whom you depend."

"By those on whom I depend?"

"Yes, your ancestors, to begin with."

"My ancestors?"

"All those who have died before you."

"What business is it of theirs, considering they're dead? I don't know them!" said Tyltyl.

"I dare say not," said the Fairy, "but they know you. And then there are all your children."

"My children? What children? I've never had any children!"

"Yes, yes, you have, thousands and thousands. They're not born yet: that's the only difference. They're waiting for the mother whom you're going to give them."

"Then it's they who will choose my bride for me?" said Tyltyl, who by this time was at his wits' end.

"Why, of course," said the Fairy; "that's how things always happen. But let's drop all this talk: we have to make a few preparations for the great journey; it's going to be rather long and tiring. . . . And first we must get

some money: I've none left at home; and my magic wand that brings it to me is being repaired ever so many thousand miles down in the centre of the earth. . . . I don't quite see where we're to get what we want: the expenses will be quite heavy. Do any of you happen to have a few hundred pounds about you?" she asked the girls.

"I've only sixpence halfpenny in my bowl," said Jaline, the beggar's daughter, "besides Tytyl's halfpenny, which I can't part with."

"I've seven and sixpence, to-night's takings at the inn," said Roselle.

"I've nothing at all," said Milette.

"No more have I," said Aimette.

"Nor I," said Belline.

"I've nothing on me," said Rosarelle, "but grandfather's very rich."

"That's all right," said the Fairy, "he'll do: he can lend us some money."

"Ah, but he's a miser!" said Rosarelle.

"No, that's where you make a mistake," said the Fairy. "There are no misers. Thanks to the sapphire, which reveals the heart of things, you'll see that he's no more

of a miser than you or I and that he'll let us have whatever we ask him for. That's the first visit we shall have to pay. . . . Well, are you ready? Which way shall we go out?"

Just then a trap-door opened in the floor and from it there rose slowly, like a great tower, a huge Shape, twice as tall as the tallest man you ever saw. It was square and enormous and most impressive in every way, reminding you of a tremendous block of granite and of something immensely strong. The Shape's face was hidden; and its vast figure was draped in grey folds that seemed stiff as rock. It was a most formidable apparition.

"I am here!" said the Shape, gruffly. "You've forgotten me, as usual!"

Tyltyl felt rather alarmed:

"Who is this gentleman?" he asked, civilly.

"He's quite right," said the Fairy. "I had forgotten all about him. He's nobody in particular: his name is Destiny. I didn't foresee that the sapphire would make him visible also. He'll have to come with us, however;

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we can't prevent him; it's his privilege. Give him your hand, Tytyl."

"Will he lead us?" asked Tytyl.

"That remains to be seen," said the Fairy. "We must hear what Light says: it's a matter for her."

You remember Light, don't you, Tytyl's best of friends, who hardly ever left his side on his former journey? He jumped for joy when he heard her name:

"Why, Light, of course, Light!" he cried. "Where is she? Isn't she coming with us?"

"Yes, yes," said the Fairy, "but she's very busy at the moment. She wasn't free this evening. We shall find her at my place, where we shall go straight from your visit to the Miser."

"How delighted I shall be to see her again!" said Tytyl. "She was so nice, so sweet, so beautiful, so loving and so kind!"

"Yes, she's all that," said the Fairy. "But come now and give Destiny your hand; it's time we made a start."

Tytyl put out his hand to the Shape:

"Here you are, sir," he said.

Destiny gripped the boy's little hand and wrist in his own huge, bronze-coloured hand, which closed down like a vice.

"Hi!" cried Tyltyl. "You're hurting me!"

"It's nothing," said the Fairy, "you'll get used to it. . . . Come, is everything ready at last? Nothing more that we've forgotten? Then one, two, three . . . and off we go!"

But there was a knock at the door.

"Who's come to disturb us now?" asked the Fairy, crossly. "Shall we never get out of this hovel?"

Another knock.

"Come in!" cried Tyltyl.

One more knock.

"Who's there?" cried Tyltyl. "Come in, can't you?"

Then the door opened slowly, showing a girl's Form shrouded in long, white veils, like a statue. The face, hands, mouth, eyes, hair and eyebrows were lifeless and white as marble, so that they could hardly be distinguished. The Form stood on the threshold without moving.

"What is it?" asked Tyltyl.

THE DOOR OPENED SLOWLY, SHOWING A GIRL'S FORM SHROUDED IN
LONG WHITE VEILS, LIKE A STATUE



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"I don't know, really," said the Fairy. "It must be somebody you've forgotten."

"I?" said Tytyl, vainly trying to remember. "I've forgotten nobody. I've never seen her before. . . . Who are you, please?" he asked, going up to the Veiled Girl.

"It's no use asking her," said the Fairy. "She can't tell you, she can't come to life, till you remember."

"But I don't. I'm thinking and trying as hard as I can, but I can find nothing."

"Very well," said the Fairy, "we shall see later, when everything is cleared up. . . . She's blocking the doorway, so we shall have to go out by the window. Come, this way! We have taken our fate in our hands; and things have begun to happen."

But now Destiny put in a word:

"Excuse me," he said, "ex-cuse me! It's I who am Fate and it's I who begin and it's I who give orders. I go first, for it's I who manage everything and I am the only master!"

When Destiny had finished delivering his speech, the windows opened right down to the ground and the whole

party moved into the starry night, with Destiny first, leading the way and dragging Tyltyl by the hand, the Fairy and the six girls next and the Veiled Girl last of all, some little distance behind the others.

THE MISER

CHAPTER II

THE MISER

PRESENTLY the party separated, the six girls going to the Fairy's palace, while the Fairy and Tyltyl made their way to the Miser's, as arranged. Before very long they found themselves outside a huge double door with a sort of flattened arch above it. The door was very old and thick and massive, bound with iron bars and studded with iron nails. And there was a formidable lock in the middle.

Tyltyl, who was carrying a wallet over his shoulder, was surprised to find his sweethearts gone and asked the Fairy what had become of them. She explained that they were at home, in her palace, and that they were quite safe and would wait for him till he returned.

"And what about Destiny?" asked Tyltyl. "I thought that he was never going to leave me again."

"That's true," said the Fairy, "it's curious. But it's not our business to run after him; it's his own affair. He may think he's indispensable, but he isn't, really."

Then Tylytl wanted to know if the Fairy was coming in with him to the Miser; but she explained that it was much better that he should see the Miser by himself:

"You're not frightened, are you?" she added, by way of trying him.

"Not a bit," said Tylytl; "but I don't quite know what I am to do."

"It's very simple," said the Fairy. "When you're inside, you turn the sapphire; then he'll give you anything you want."

Tylytl was a little more frightened than he was willing to confess:

"He won't attack me, will he?" he asked. "I've no weapons, you know."

"On the contrary," said the Fairy, "he'll be delighted to see you."

"How shall I get in? There's no bell that I can see and no knocker. Am I to tap at the door?"

"Don't do anything of the sort!" said the Fairy. "That would be giving him a hint; and he would become unmanageable. But this also is quite simple. I'll touch the big lock with my wand"—this was her second-best

magic wand, which had been brought to her in the meantime—"the doors will slide back to right and left; and you will suddenly be on the other side, that is to say, right inside the cave, before he as much as suspects your presence. Once there, you can keep quiet in your corner for a moment and watch him playing with his gold, if that amuses you; and I expect it will amuse you, for it is rather funny. Then, when you've had enough, turn the sapphire. Get over there, on the left, against the wall of the arch, so that you can slip into his den at once, without making a noise. . . . And now look out. The doors will disappear! And I'll take myself off this way."

So saying, she touched the great lock with her magic wand and slipped away to the right. Everything happened as she had said. The enormous, heavy doors at once opened in the middle, sliding to either side and vanishing from view; and Tytyl saw before him the whole of the Miser's den, which was an immense cave, with low arches, in which were piled any number of large sacks bursting and brimming over with gold, silver and copper coins. And all this was lighted by just one wretched, smoky candle.

Tyltyl hid himself as well as he could in a dark corner, where he stood gazing at the Miser, an old, hook-nosed man, with a dirty white beard and long, straggling wisps of hair. The Miser wore a sort of squalid, patched dressing-gown; and in front of him was a square of old carpet, with on it three sacks all bulging with gold. He was talking away to himself like anything:

“To-day,” he said, “I shall count the contents of these three sacks all over again. I must have made a mistake in my last reckoning. There are three sovereigns missing, which makes a mighty difference in a total of thirty thousand pounds. How can a man sleep with such an anxiety on his mind? . . . Each of these sacks ought to hold ten thousand pounds, the first and second in sovereigns and the third in half-sovereigns. I’ll empty them on the carpet first, to see what a lovely heap they make.”

And he poured the sovereigns in the first sack on the carpet:

“How they sparkle, how they sparkle!” he cried. “What a lot of them there are! When you see the gold spreading itself out like that, it’s impossible to believe that it could all go into one sack! . . . Let’s have an-

"HOW THEY SPARKLE, HOW THEY SPARKLE"! HE CRIED



other. This is the sack with the half-sovereigns."

And he emptied out the contents of another sack:

"Aren't they dear little fellows?" he exclaimed. "They're just as lovely as the big ones. They are younger, that's all, and there are twice as many of them."

For of course there were in the sack twenty thousand half-sovereigns.

"Now let's see what the third one holds."

And he emptied this one too. But this time a few of the sovereigns rolled off the carpet.

"Oh, no, oh, no, children!" cried the Miser, throwing himself flat on the floor to catch them. "This will never do! You mustn't run away like that! . . . Nothing is allowed to leave this cave! . . . Trying to hide from me, are you? And where do you want to go to, pray? Don't you know that there's no place like home? . . . Fancy running away like that from daddy! I'd never have thought it of you! This way, children, this way, my darlings! This way, my pretty ones! Back to the heap, back to your little beds, then you'll be happy! . . ."

One of the coins had rolled away a little farther than the rest.

“Don’t do it again, you,” he said, picking it up. “You’re always trying to make off: you’re a regular little torment, you are, and you set a bad example to the others. Beg my pardon, or I’ll punish you. I tell you what I’ll do to you: I’ll *spend* you, do you hear? Or I’ll give you away to a beggar! . . . No, no, I won’t do that,” he said, kissing the golden sovereign, “I’m only pretending. I was only chaffing you. There, there, don’t cry! I was just frightening you. I love you all the same; but don’t do it again! . . . Here, here, here,” he cried, “they’re here, in front of me and all around me! It will take me quite a fortnight to count them all and weigh them in my scales. . . . What a lot of them there are, oh, what a lot of them! And how pretty they are! . . . I know them every one, I could call them all by their names. They would need forty thousand different names; and each of those names stands for a perfect treasure.”

The Miser was quick at mental arithmetic, you see: twice ten thousand sovereigns is twenty thousand; and twenty thousand half-sovereigns added to that make forty thousand. So he was right.

He now began to roll on the carpet, all amidst the gold:

“I love to see them so close to me,” he said. “Oh, what a cosy bed! And what a joy it is to be among one’s daughters! . . . For they are my daughters: I brought them into the world; I have looked after them from the day when they were born; I have shielded them from harm and fondled and petted them and spoilt them; I know their history and all the trouble they’ve given me. But that is all forgiven and forgotten: they love me and I love them and we shall never, never, part again! . . . Oh, how happy we shall be together!”

The Miser now filled his two hands with the gold, where he lay, and sent it trickling over his heart and on his forehead and down his beard and sighed and laughed and giggled until he ended by roaring with delight.

But suddenly he gave a great start and jumped up from the floor. A sound seemed to have struck his ears.

“What’s that?” he cried. “Who’s there?”

There was no answer.

“It’s nothing,” he said to himself. “No one would dare. . . .”

But just then he caught sight of Tyltyl and began to shout like mad:

“A thief! A thief! A thief! . . . What are you doing here? What are you doing here?”

And he made a rush for Tyltyl, with his hands clutching like claws, looking frightened and frightful at one and the same time.

Quick as thought, Tyltyl turned the sapphire; and the Miser stopped short. He appeared for some seconds to be undergoing an inward struggle; his hands dropped to his sides; and his face brightened up and lost its hardness. In fact he became almost pleasant to look at. You would have thought that he was waking from a bad dream and trying to wipe the memory of it from his brow. He started in astonishment at all the gold spread over the carpet, as though he had no idea what it was; he felt it with his foot and pushed it away from him; and, when he next looked at Tyltyl, he addressed him in a very calm and gentle voice:

“I beg your pardon,” he said, “I must have been asleep. I expect you woke me. How did you get in? What have you come for?”

"I've come to ask you to lend me a little money," said Tytyl. "I understand that I want some before I can go in search of my bride."

"Have you anything to put it in?" asked the Miser.

"I've brought this wallet."

"I shall be delighted to fill it for you," said the Miser, amiably. "But I warn you that gold is very heavy and that you won't be able to carry it away."

"Please put in just whatever you think right," said Tytyl, politely.

"Well, suppose you help me," said the Miser, pouring the gold by handfuls into the wallet. "We'll fill it to the brim and see how that does. We can easily lighten it for you afterwards, if it's too heavy."

"Oh, but you're giving me too much!" said Tytyl. "I don't want all that. . . . So you're not a miser, as they told me?"

"I?" said the Miser. "Not at all. Why should I be? I haven't very long to live and I'm not in need of anything. I hardly eat enough to keep a bird alive; and I never drink anything but water."

"Then why were you lying on your gold when I came

in?" asked Tyltyl. "You were kissing it and fondling it and calling it by all sorts of pet names. You seemed to worship it."

"Oh, I don't know!" said the Miser. "It just amuses me. When a man grows old, he has to amuse himself as best he can. But it isn't I who do it. That sort of thing is only a kind of dream. I'm thinking all the time of something different. . . . All men are like that when they reach my age. They are not often where you see them; they are not often doing what they appear to do; and every one lives in one of those dreams which have nothing to do with the truth. . . . But this is not the moment to explain things to you. . . . There, your wallet is full. See if you can lift it."

Tyltyl made a tremendous effort:

"No, really, it *is* a bit heavy," he said. "Let's take some of the gold out."

"How's that?" asked the Miser, emptying about half of it.

"Oh, look here," said Tyltyl, "you're taking it all! There won't be enough left. I must put some of it back."

"I say," laughed the Miser, "are you becoming a miser now?"

"No," said Tytyl, "but I don't know that I shall have a chance of coming back again. . . . Would you mind helping me lift the wallet on my shoulder?"

"There you are," said the Miser, giving him a hand with it.

"Thank you," said Tytyl. "I say, what a weight gold is!"

For he was fairly staggering under the load.

"Don't I know it!" said the Miser. "Have you far to go?"

"I really can't tell."

"What's the weather like outside?"

"It was bright sunshine when I arrived."

"One wouldn't think it in here," said the Miser. "Fancy, it's years since I saw the sky or the green trees! . . . But you can't breathe under the weight of your bag, you poor little man! . . . Come, let us say good-bye: there's no knowing when we shall meet again. I'm ever so much obliged to you for the pleasure of your

company and especially for your kindness in waking me up. I shall make the most of the days that remain to me."

"Well, good-bye," said Tyltyl, "and thank you very much. Which is the way out?"

"This way, I suppose," said the Miser, pointing to the way by which Tyltyl had come.

Tyltyl stepped out through the arch; and the great doors at once slid back and closed behind him. He was left standing by himself in the dark, outside the shut door, wondering where he was to go next.

Then Destiny suddenly loomed up out of the shadow:

"This way!" he shouted.

"Hullo!" said Tyltyl. "You're there, are you? I thought you had deserted me."

"I was here all the time," said Destiny, grasping the boy's hand. "I never lost sight of you for a moment."

"Yes," said Tyltyl, "but, look here, don't walk quite so fast. My bag's awfully heavy. It would be much kinder of you if you helped me to carry it a little, instead of making me rush along like this."

“I am not man’s servant,” said Destiny, “and I take my orders from no man. . . . Forward, forward, forward!”

And off they darted to the Fairy’s palace.

THE FAIRY'S PALACE

CHAPTER III

THE FAIRY'S PALACE

MEANWHILE, the seven girls were locked up in the queerest sort of room that you ever saw. It was a sort of lumber-room at the Fairy's palace and was filled with the things that belong to the best-known fairy-tales. There was Cinderella's little glass slipper, for instance, and the pumpkin which was turned into a coach for her to drive to the ball in; and Little Red Ridinghood's cake and bowl; and Hop-o'-my-Thumb's pebbles; and the golden crowns of the Ogre's daughters; and the Sleeping Beauty's spindle; and the Giant's seven-leagued boots; and Blue Beard's great key; and our old friend the Blue Bird, in his silver cage. And, hanging from the wall, were Catskin's dresses, which perhaps you don't know quite so well, but which were the colours of the sun, the moon and the weather.

The light in the room was grey and unbecoming, which made all these things look rather drab and tawdry. And

Tyltyl's little sweethearts also looked much less pretty than when they entered the cottage; and they seemed rather tired, discontented and glum, all except the Veiled Girl, who stood on one side, without moving or speaking and with no expression whatever on her face.

"Where on earth have they brought us?" asked Bel-line, the butcher's daughter, crossly.

"I haven't the least idea," said Rosarelle, the mayor's daughter, techily. "But I must say it's not a nice place in which to keep young ladies waiting."

"Yes, it looks like a lumber-room where they've stored all the odds and ends and litter of the house."

Rosarelle began to move about the room, touching the different things:

"What's this?" she said. "A spindle? Gracious, what for? . . . A pumpkin, a cake, an old bowl and goodness knows what besides! . . . And it's all so disgracefully kept. Look at this lot of ancient fly-blown, spun-glass dresses! My dear, how horrible: did you ever see anything like them? . . . What sort of a place can it be? A rag-and-bone-shop, a pawn-broker's, or a thieves' kitchen? . . . Whom can it belong to? A re-

ceiver of stolen goods? Or," waving her hands at some of the odd-looking frocks, "a Hottentot dressmaker's?"

"There's something of everything," said Belline, "except a broom and duster."

"One wouldn't be enough," said Rosarelle, satirically.

"And nothing to sit on but an old wooden bench," said Belline.

"But it's carved, my love!" said Rosarelle, bitingly.

"Yes, carved in dust," said Belline, with a sneer.

"Reach me one of those hideous rags," said Rosarelle, "and let me wipe it."

"Wait, miss," said Belline, eager to show her respect for the mayor's daughter. "I'll do that."

And she took down the moon-coloured dress and dusted the seat with it:

"There, that's a little better. Now at least we have one place almost clean enough to sit on."

And both of them, feeling very tired and footsore after their journey, took their seats on the bench.

Rosarelle produced a pair of eye-glasses with a long tortoise-shell handle and looked round her with an air of great disgust:

"What I want to know," she said, "is where have we got to? My dear, have we fallen into a trap?"

"The company is certainly a little mixed," said Belline. "There's the miller's daughter, the girl from the inn, the woodcutter . . ."

"Or rather, to be accurate," said Rosarelle, spitefully, "the woodstealer. Why, there's even the little beggar-girl from the bridge, to whom I refused a penny last Sunday. My dear, you should have heard the insolent way in which she asked for it!"

"And who's that white statue standing in the corner?" asked Belline. "The one who never stirs, never speaks and follows us wherever we go?"

"That great lump of clay?" said Rosarelle. "That ugly waxwork? That washed-out plaster saint? I'm sure *I* don't know."

"She looks very ill."

"She may have any sort of complaint. I tell you, dear, we must be careful: it's very likely catching."

Here Aimette, the miller's daughter, came up to the bench and said that she was very tired and would like to sit down too. But Rosarelle blazed out at her:

"Mind what you're about, miss!" she said, in her disagreeable way. "There's dust enough as it is: I don't want flour into the bargain."

Roselle, the inn-keeper's daughter, now joined in:

"What's all this, what's all this?" she said. "Are we turning up our nose at flour?"

"I wasn't addressing my remarks to you, madam," said Rosarelle.

"No," said Roselle, "but I happen to be addressing mine to you. What bread would you eat if you had no flour, I should like to know?"

"You would do better," said Rosarelle, "to tell your father to pay the three quarters' rent that's in arrears."

"He'll pay his rent," said Roselle, "when your horrid old miser of a grandfather has seen to those repairs. We've been asking to have them done these last three years."

"Is it the repairs that prevent your father from paying his butcher's bills?" asked Belline, taking sides with Rosarelle.

"Does he owe anything at your shop?" asked Roselle.

"It's six months since we saw the colour of his money," said Belline.

"He's waiting to see the colour of yours at the inn," Roselle snapped back.

"Of mine, indeed," said Belline. "You can wait a long time before I set foot in your dirty dram-shop!"

"Yes, but that father of yours isn't so particular," Roselle retorted. "He's always ready to come along on Sundays and drink more than is good for him and go away without paying his bill."

"Don't answer her, my dear," said Rosarelle. "You and I are not used to these pot-house brawls."

"As for you, miss," said Roselle, turning on the mayor's daughter, "as for you, who pretend to be so grand, you just go and ask your father who it was that nibbled the holes, which were *not* made by the rats, in the town's cash-box!"

Rosarelle sprang to her feet in a furious rage:

"Holes not made by the rats! What do you mean, pray?" she exclaimed.

"I mean exactly what every one in the village means!"

"Mind what you're saying," cried Rosarelle, "and say it again, if you dare."

"Well, what would you do if I did say it again? You don't frighten me with your airs and graces."

"Never mind my airs and graces: I'll soon show you what I'll do."

"Well, then," said the inn-keeper's daughter, "I do say it again."

"And take that for your answer!" said Rosarelle, boxing Roselle's ears with all her might.

This gave rise to a general uproar. All the girls began to utter piercing yells and screams. Roselle and Aimette made a rush for Rosarelle and Belline, while Milette, the woodcutter's daughter, and Jalline, the beggar's daughter, who hitherto had remained silent, strove in vain to separate the combatants. The Veiled Girl alone stood motionless in her corner, just as though she were not present. But the others clawed one another's faces and tore one another's hair and yelled and shrieked, till they ended by creating such a din that Tytyl, who had just arrived from the Miser's, heard them from the far end of the palace.

He came racing along in a state of the greatest scare and dismay. He was bare-headed and only half-dressed and did not understand a word of what was going on.

"What is it?" he asked. "What's the matter?" What has happened? Has there been an accident? What have you been doing?"

Thereupon the girls all began to speak together:

"It's she!"

"No, no, it was Rosarelle who began!"

"I tell you, it was Roselle!"

"She insulted me!"

"She boxed my ears!"

"She dared to talk against my father!"

"She spoke ill of my mother!"

"She's lying, she's lying!"

"She nearly pulled my ear off!"

"She's driven a hairpin into my cheek!"

They really had been behaving very badly, as you have seen.

Then the Fairy stepped in and asked Tyltyl what the matter was.

"I don't know, ma'am," said he, in his bewilderment.

"I think they must have gone mad. They were so sweet when I left them! I should never have known them like this! Look, they are quite different: Rosarelle and Bel-line's eyes are blazing like furies', Aimette looks so sour and Roselle so impudent, Jalline hasn't washed her face and Milette's cheeks are as red as a turkey-cock's. . . . I can't bear it, oh, oh, oh, I can't bear it!"

And he burst into tears and crooked his arm and hid his eyes behind it like a tiny child crying.

"But, you little silly," said the Fairy, "it's your own fault!"

"My fault?"

"Yes, of course it's your fault. . . . But first, tell me, where have you come from? And what have you done with your jacket and your green hat?"

"Why, ma'am," said Tytyl, "I was busy dressing; I was putting on the silk breeches and the little jacket embroidered with pearls which you told me I was to wear when I went to see the Ancestors. Then I heard screams, dropped my jacket, ran along here and found them fighting, tearing one another's hair and scratching one another's faces. . . ."

"A pretty business!" said the Fairy. "A pretty business, upon my word! That will teach you to go running after them without your talisman, which reveals the truth. I call it most improper, most incorrect. . . . Don't you see that you are not seeing them as they are?"

"I'm not seeing them as they are? Then how do I see them?"

"Why, as they are not, of course; that is to say, as you ought never to see them. . . . It's all so wonderfully simple: anything that's ugly isn't true, never has been true and never will be."

"That's easily said and all very well," said Tytyl; "but you see what you do see."

"When you see what you do see," replied the Fairy, "you see nothing at all. I've told you before, it's what you do not see that makes the world go round. . . . All this doesn't count: it's only a little foam on the surface of the ocean, whereas the truth lies in the depths. . . . But run quickly and fetch the sapphire; then we shall once more see deep down into their souls, the truth of their hearts and the well-spring of their life. . . . Wait,

**"OH, LIGHT, LIGHT"! CRIED TYLTYL, "IT'S MY OWN DEAR LIGHT!
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN ALL THIS TIME?"**



though, you needn't trouble: here's Light coming and she's bringing you your hat."

And Light appeared, looking just as she did on that Christmas Eve, ten years ago, of which you read in *The Children's Blue Bird*, a maiden of surpassing loveliness. Gleaming veils covered her figure without hiding its beauty; her bare arms, stretched in the attitude of giving, seemed transparent; her great clear eyes wrapped all upon whom they fell in a fond embrace; and she stood in the centre of a halo of sunshine. Once again she had consented to be confined, for a brief spell, within a human form, so that she might lead Tytyl out into the world and teach him to know that other Light, the Light of the Mind, which we never see, but which helps us to see things as they are.

She was devoted to Tytyl; and Tytyl had learnt to love her more than anybody, except his father and mother.

"Good-evening, Tytyl," she said.

"Oh, Light, Light!" cried Tytyl, flinging himself eagerly into her arms. "It's my own dear Light! . . . Where have you been all this time? What have you

been doing since I saw you last? I have missed you so much and looked for you so often!"

"My dear little Tyltyl!" said Light. "I have never lost sight of you for a moment. I have guided you and counselled you and given you many a kiss, without your knowing it. . . . But we will talk about all this later. To-day we have no time. I have only one night to give you; and there is a great deal to be done."

Now Destiny came tramping in:

"Where's Tyltyl?" he roared.

"Here," said Tyltyl, boldly. "I'm not trying to hide."

"And quite right too," said Destiny, "for it would be no use if you did. There's no escaping me!"

But Tyltyl was gazing at Destiny in astonishment:

"Why, what's the matter with you?" he asked. "What has happened to you? You look so much smaller! You seem to be less tall and less broad. . . . You're not ill, are you?"

Tyltyl was perfectly right. Destiny had shrunk several inches, both in length and in width. But he denied the fact and began to roll out a string of long words.

They were very difficult words and some of them seem almost impossible; yet I can assure you that they are all in the dictionary, for I have looked to see.

"I?" he said. "Ill? Changed? Tush! I never change, I am always the same: I am insuperable, insensible, invulnerable, immutable, inexorable, irresistible, invisible, inflexible and irrevocable!"

"All right, all right," said Tytyl. "I was merely saying . . ."

But the Fairy interrupted him and whispered to him in his ear to be quiet, or he would only vex Destiny and make him get quite out of hand. She explained that it was probably being so close to Light that had upset him; Light and Destiny never did agree.

Then she raised her voice and said:

"Now, children, the time has come. Tytyl, put on your hat and turn the sapphire. We shall see what happens. Sometimes it works on people's hearts, sometimes on their minds, sometimes on the objects around them and often on all three: one can't tell beforehand."

Tytyl turned the sapphire; and a marvellous thing occurred. The whole room brightened with a blue and

supernatural light which gave not only beauty but life and movement to everything in it. The things out of the fairy-tales seemed to wake up. The spindle revolved madly and reeled off threads of gold and crystal; the pumpkin swelled to an enormous size, lit up and rocked from side to side; the Blue Bird burst into song; the moon-coloured and sun-coloured dresses waved and glittered with silver and gold; the weather-coloured dress was a beautiful blue and pink and grey; and all the walls gleamed with precious stones.

But more remarkable still was the transformation undergone by the six girls. It was perfectly wonderful to see their features turn gentler and milder. Their eyes opened wider, their lips bent into smiles and their frocks became gay and bright. Every sign of anger and quarrelling disappeared; and there was nothing around but gladness, kindness and beauty.

Tyltyl went quite crazy with delight, hopping about, clapping his hands and rushing from one to the other, bestowing kisses on them all, receiving kisses in return and not knowing, in his affection, which of them to listen

to. He had words of love and praise for every one of them.

But now there came a sort of tragedy: the Veiled Girl, who had played no part in all this and who had passed unnoticed while all the others were being made much of, suddenly staggered in her corner, fainted and, without uttering a sound, fell like a statue on the floor, where she lay outstretched and motionless.

There was a moment of silence and terror, followed by cries of sympathy and by a general bustle. The six girls all rushed to her assistance and gathered round her.

Roselle knelt on the floor and lifted her up and called out for somebody to help her.

"She's not hurt, is she?" asked Rosarelle, anxiously.

"No," said Roselle, looking to see, "I don't see any bruise."

"She's breathing and sighing," said Aimette, stroking the Veiled Girl's forehead.

"She has only fainted," said Rosarelle, kissing her. "Tell us what you feel. You're not in pain, dear, are you?"

The Veiled Girl did not speak.

Jalline took one of her hands and stroked it:

"Perhaps she's hungry," she said.

"No," said Milette, stroking the other hand, "can't you feel she's cold?"

"Will you have my cloak?" asked Jalline.

"No, no, it's not that," said Roselle. "What she wants is a drop of brandy." As the inn-keeper's daughter, of course she looked on that as the great remedy. "I haven't my bottle," she went on to say. "And don't all crowd round her like that: she's suffocating. Give her air!"

Rosarelle, who was supporting the Veiled Girl's head, asked if anybody had some water and suggested sending for a doctor.

"She's as white as marble," said Belline. "Surely she can't be dead?"

"No, no, she's coming to," said Rosarelle. "I can hear her heart beating."

The Fairy now interfered:

"Come, come, it's nothing," she said, in her blunt, practical way. "I have practised medicine longer than men

have and know a good deal more about it. Do not be uneasy; there is nothing to fear. I will undertake to cure her But we are wasting precious time, the night is passing and we shall get nothing done. Come, dears, go and dress yourselves; your clothes are waiting for you and everything is ready. Just follow Light: she knows the way and will advise you what to wear. We will meet in the great ballroom."

The six girls went out, with Light leading the road.

"You go also, Destiny," said the Fairy. "Follow Light. You want another costume. You can't possibly go as you are. It doesn't do to be conspicuous, especially at such a moment as this."

Destiny did as she told him, though he seemed to go very grudgingly and reluctantly.

"I don't quite know how to dress the fellow," she said. "However, Light will think of something. She has twice my imagination. . . . Let's see to the little patient. She's better already."

And she helped the Veiled Girl to rise:

"There, there," she said, kindly. "Sit down on this bench. No? You would rather stand up? Well, just

as you please: only, in that case, go and lean against one of the columns, for the walls will soon disappear from sight Now that we are alone, Tyltyl, pray have the goodness to tell me, between ourselves, who that girl is."

"But, ma'am, I don't know at all"

"You must make an effort. She can't live unless you remember who she is. "It's a very great responsibility."

"But you mustn't blame me, ma'am," said Tyltyl. "I've done what I could; I can't make it out."

"So much the worse for you," said the Fairy. "I can't understand it either. . . . Come, get dressed. Here's the little jacket which Light brought you."

Tyltyl put on the pearl-embroidered jacket.

"And now, with one stroke of the wand, we will enter the ballroom and see what your little friends have made of themselves."

She touched the walls of the lumber-room, which disappeared by magic; and all that remained standing was the pillars and aisles, forming the entrance-hall to an immense, light ballroom, which looked as if it had been

hewn and carved out of a great mountain of amber. Under the dazzling arches the six girls moved to and fro, arrayed in resplendent, trailing gowns. Their feet were shod with gold slippers; their hair hung loose; their hands were filled with flowers; in short, they looked too beautiful for words.

They beckoned gaily to Tytyl, who was taken aback for a moment and then rushed towards them and joined in their games and dances. They all hunted the slipper and went round the mulberry-bush and played at hide-and-seek and waltzed and jazzed and ended up with a stately Roger de Coverly.

The only one who had not changed her costume was the Veiled Girl, who stood on one side, all white, leaning against a pillar. Even Destiny was dressed up: he stalked about the ballroom draped in a long, black cape, with a broad-brimmed Spanish sombrero covering his head.

The Fairy was frightfully amused:

"I say, look at Destiny!" she exclaimed. "Light has dressed him like the villain in a play!"

She clapped her hands:

“Come, children, it is time that we were starting. All
this doesn’t count: the real work is about to begin.”

And they all trooped out.

THE ANCESTORS

CHAPTER IV

THE ANCESTORS

TYLTYL and Light came toiling up the rocks alone. It had been a long and arduous climb; and Tyltyl was quite out of breath. He dropped on to a boulder and said:

"They lived a long way up, the Ancestors. Aren't you tired?"

"No," said Light, "for I was born in the mountains."

"You're not like Destiny, then," said Tyltyl, bending over a crevice. "He has almost given out. He's still at the bottom of the last precipice, with my little friends. He stumbles at every step he takes and is limping very badly. . . . They won't be here yet awhile; and I am very glad to have a few minutes alone with you, before they join us, for I have a lot of things to ask you."

"Ask me anything you like, dear," said Light. "I will do my best to answer."

"What do you think of these little sweethearts of

mine?" said Tyltyl. "If you had to choose, which of them would you take?"

"I like them all," said Light, "but it is not for me to choose. No one but yourself can tell which one you love best."

"Ah, that's not so easy! You see, I love them all! . . . For instance, I love little Jalline, the beggar's daughter: she is so gentle and so sweet, such a darling, don't you think?"

"Yes, she is very attractive: a pretty little creature, with an innocent, simple mind."

"But I also love the mayor's daughter, Rosarelle," said Tyltyl. "She is really very handsome, not in the least conceited and much better-educated than the others. And then think of what she has done: she has left everything to come with me!"

"Yes, that is the proof of a real love," said Light.

"But I also love Roselle, the inn-keeper's daughter, who is a very pretty girl, so healthy and strong and frank and brave and cheerful and amusing: a regular good sort, I call her. You can't think how kind and affectionate she is."

"Yes, she seems full of good qualities; and I agree that there is something very nice about her."

"But I also love the woodcutter's daughter, Milette," said Tytyl, who, as you see, was in a great quandary, with that half-dozen sweethearts of his. "She has such lovely eyes and hair! . . . At first she strikes you as a little awkward, a little shy; but, when you come to know her, it's quite different: she is really very playful and full of fun: . . . And then, have you noticed her pretty mouth and teeth?"

"Yes, I've noticed them," said Light.

"But I also love Belline, the butcher's daughter. To begin with, she's my cousin; and one always loves one's cousins. And then there's something about her dark, beautiful eyes that frightens me rather. I adore that: it's so thrilling. But she's not unkind at all Have you noticed her smile? It's so mysterious: one can never tell exactly what it means."

"Yes, she has a strangely interesting smile."

"But I also love the miller's daughter, Aimette," said Tytyl. "To begin with, she's also my cousin. She keeps her eyes lowered under her long, curling eyelashes;

she blushes when you look at her and weeps when you speak to her. You might say that she looks a little silly: well, she's not that at all. She's quite different when you come to know her. She's very bright, really, and very jolly and whispers such nice, sweet things to you that you long to kiss her at once."

"I can see," said Light, "that you will not have an easy choice before you."

"Which do you think the best of them?" asked Tytyl.

"There are neither better nor worse. Each one is as good as the other; and all are good when they suffer or when they love."

"The nuisance of it is," said Tytyl, "that it seems you mustn't love more than one. . . . Tell me, though, is that true, or is it only one of those things which people say to children just to keep them quiet?"

"No, it's perfectly true," said Light. "When you love many, it merely shows that you haven't yet found the one whom you were meant to love."

"But, after all," Tytyl insisted, "you, who know everything and see everything, must know better than I and can tell me what I ought to do."

"No, dear," said Light, "that is beyond me, beyond the range of my sight. It is for this reason that we are going to consult those who do know; and they are near at hand, because they live inside you. We appear to be taking a great journey: that is not really so; we are not going outside yourself and all our adventures are happening within you. . . . But I hear your little sweethearts down below. Where is your green hat?"

"Here. I took it off because I was feeling hot."

"Put it on again quickly, so that there may be no more misunderstanding, as last time. And turn the sapphire."

He did so; and, all of a sudden, on every side, all sorts of monsters came popping up out of the ground and from between the rocks. They were the queerest monsters, with more or less human or animal shapes and very ugly and repulsive faces. They all hustled Tytyl and formed themselves into a ring and frisked and danced around him.

Tytyl was terrified:

"Hullo, hullo, hullo!" he cried, in his alarm.
"What's all this?"

"It's nothing," said Light. "You must have turned the sapphire from left to right."

"So I did, I believe: I forgot. . . . But what do they want with me? They are pushing up against me and snapping at my feet."

"They won't hurt you," said Light. "They are merely your own thoughts, which you sometimes think in secret. Now you have set them free; and they are showing themselves for an instant as they are."

"What!" said Tytyl. "Are my thoughts really as ugly as that? I should never have believed it!"

"Don't take it to heart," said Light. "They are not as ugly as some, because you are still very young and have never done anything wicked. If you could see the secret thoughts of some people, you would be amazed and shocked! . . . Besides, you have beautiful thoughts as well; but they are shy and do not show themselves so readily However, I see the girls coming. Turn the sapphire from right to left, so that we may get rid of these monsters, whom it will not do for them to see."

The moment he had turned the sapphire the proper way, the ugly creatures all retreated into the ground.

The six girls appeared, with Destiny walking ahead and the Veiled Girl behind. She kept on one side, while the others overwhelmed him with caresses and all spoke at the same time:

“Good-evening, Tylyl dear!”

“So we’ve found you again!”

“We were *so* anxious about you!”

“We couldn’t keep up with you, you went so fast.”

“Aren’t you tired, dear?”

“May we kiss you?”

“Destiny delayed us.”

“I wanted to run, but he stood in the way.”

“Mind you don’t catch cold.”

“Kiss me, Tylyl!”

“And me!”

“And me!”

“And me!”

Tylyl kissed them all round;

“My dear little sweethearts!” he said. “What darlings you all are and how happy I feel! . . . I do hope I have not made you walk too fast? You must forgive me if I did: I am rather in a hurry. . . . Jalline dear, you

haven't hurt your foot, have you? . . . And you, Rosarelle? You are not used to climbing rocks, I know. . . . Aimette's hands are cold and Roselle has made herself much too hot. . . ."

"Come," said Light, "we will talk about all this later. We must hurry to the Ancestors, who are waiting for us and would be very much annoyed if we were later in arriving."

Meanwhile, Destiny had grown smaller still. He was now hardly taller than a man of the average size. He looked very tired and was sitting huddled up on a rock. He slowly raised himself to his feet, however, and said:

"Not a step farther!"

"Hullo, Destiny!" said Tyltyle. "You've grown a bit smaller again!"

"Not I!" said Destiny. "I never change. I am always the same, I am . . ."

And he was going to rattle out all those long words once more, if Tyltyle had not stopped him by saying:

"I know, I know! . . . It's Light being so near to you, perhaps. . . ."

"Light and I have nothing in common," said Destiny. "At any rate, I am the master and I order a halt."

"By all means," said Light. "There is no need to go any farther. We have arrived; we are here without taking another step, at the abode of the Ancestors."

As she spoke, the rocks parted, revealing an immense open space, all flooded with glorious sunlight, which made everything seem blissful to look upon and everlastingly glad. The back and the two sides of the square were formed of houses of different ages and periods. Some were stately and dignified, some lowly and humble, but all were radiant with that wonderful light.

Let us take some of them in order, beginning with the one on the right, in front. This was the cottage of Tyltyl's dead grandparents, which you have already visited in *The Children's Blue Bird*. Next came a farmhouse, of a rather older date; then a little shop of the eighteenth century, when George III. was king; and so it went on, down to the back and across and up the left again: a town-house of the seventeenth century, a sixteenth-century prison, ale-house and hospital, a fifteenth-

century mansion, some older hovels and cabins, an old Norman church of the twelfth century, a farm and villa built by the Romans, in their day, and so on. At the back, an endlessly long street ran into the distance; and this was bordered by the very oldest houses of all and led to the caves in which the wild men used to dwell in the times before history was written.

Right in the front, near where Tytyl and his companion stood, were three or four stone benches, shaded by magnificent trees: laurels, plane-trees and cypresses.

Tytyl, Light, Destiny and the six girls stepped forward, followed a little way behind by the Veiled Girl, who kept to one side, as usual. They had taken but a few paces when Tytyl's grandparents, Gaffer and Granny Tyl, came hurrying out of their cottage and threw themselves into their grandson's arms with every exclamation of delight and joy.

"Tytyl! Tytyl!" cried Granny Tyl. "Gracious, you again? But this time it's not a surprise. We were expecting you; we were told three days ago. All the same, though, we're so glad to see you that it's a little difficult to believe at first But how big and strong

you've grown, dear! And so good-looking: I should never have known you! . . . Oh, dear, how nice it is to get a kiss like this now and again!"

"Haven't you brought Mytyl with you this time?" asked Gaffer Tyl.

"Of course he hasn't," said Granny Tyl. "You know it's not her turn yet. . . . We know what you're here for, Tytyl: you've not come to see *us*. You needn't blush, you young rascal, you scamp, you! . . . There, there, you're quite right; the sooner you set about it the better. . . . So it's one of these girls whom you have to choose?"

"It seems so," said Tytyl.

"Ho, ho!" said Gaffer Tyl, eyeing them with the air of a great judge of beauty. "And, on my word, a very nice lot too! My compliments, Tytyl! I admire your taste. . . . If I were you," he said, nodding his head towards Roselle, "I'd choose that one: she's the prettiest and the plumpest."

"Hold your tongue, will you?" said Granny Tyl. "No one's asking your advice: you know you've no say in the matter. You and I are still too young: we haven't

been here long enough, we have hardly begun to get cold and we haven't had time to learn our way about and to pick up ideas. It takes so long; there's so much to learn! But the others, especially the oldest, who now are the youngest: it's they who know everything. . . ."

"What?" cried Tyltyl. "The oldest are the youngest in this country?"

"Yes," said Granny Tyl, "it appears one gets younger as one grows older up here. I'm beginning to notice it myself."

"That's odd," said Tyltyl. "But where are they? I see nobody."

"They'll come very soon," said Gaffer Tyl. "I wonder they're not here yet."

"Are there many of them?" asked Tyltyl.

"What do you think!" said Granny Tyl. "All your ancestors since the world began! There'd be so many that we shouldn't know where to put them! We shall see only a few of them. A good many are travelling in other worlds; and, as a matter of fact, some of the oldest are always away. But those who are on the spot choose in the name of all the rest. They always agree; and it

seems they very seldom make a mistake. . . . But here is one coming out of his house. You see that little man locking up his shop?"

Tyltyl looked and saw a spruce little fellow putting up the shutters of the eighteenth-century shop and locking the door behind him.

"Who's he?" asked Tyltyl.

"That's your grandfather's grandfather," said Granny Tyl. "He was a grocer a hundred and fifty years ago."

"What funny clothes he's got on!"

"He's dressed in the things which he used to wear in his shop. Here, as a rule, the weather is so mild and the air so warm and balmy that we've no need for clothes; but you wouldn't be able to see us if we hadn't any; and so, in your honour, we've put on those we used to wear on earth. It'll be quite amusing: some of them date back ever so far. . . . Look, here they come, out of the houses they once lived in."

A prosperous-looking citizen now stepped out of the seventeenth-century town-house and a prisoner out of the sixteenth-century prison. This man was wearing chains and irons on his hands and feet; but his shackles seemed

to have grown light and to cause him no inconvenience whatever. He caught Tyltyl's eye at once.

"Who's that one?" asked our young friend. "Was he chained up?"

"Yes," said Granny Tyl; "he's one of your ancestors who spent nearly all his life in prison."

"It's not a thing to boast about," said Tyltyl. "He'd have done better to have stayed indoors."

"Oh, but he did nothing wrong!" said Granny Tyl. "He used to steal bread, or other things to eat, to keep his little ones from starving. Then they put him in prison. He suffered a great deal in his time; and we think a lot of him."

While they were speaking, the Ancestors continued to leave their houses, one by one. Among others, a very important and richly-dressed man appeared on the threshold of the fifteenth-century mansion.

"Who's that one?" asked Tyltyl.

"That is the richest of your ancestors," said Gaffer Tyl. "It seems that we were very well off at one time; but it didn't last. However, that doesn't matter here: the only thing that counts is what a man has done or thought.

For instance, you see those beggars over there, coming out of the church?"

Some four or five beggars were making their way from the old Norman church. They were clad in rags that would have been pitiful to behold, only the fairy light that reigned over everything made them look almost beautiful.

"Yes, I see any number of them," said Tyltyl.

"Well, it seems that several generations of us were beggars. We came after one another, father and son, at the same church, occupying the same places in the same doorway. It was a very good thing for us, so I am told. It taught us patience, resignation, endurance, temperance and a habit of never catching cold. . . . But do you see the oldest, the one who looks poorest of all?"

"The one with the grand white beard?"

"Precisely," said Gaffer Tyl. "Well, he's the Great Beggar-man, the one whom we respect most, first because he has an iron constitution and next because he appears to have done a very great deal of thinking in his corner under the porch. They say it's he who did most to improve our brains."

"But I don't see any women among them," said Tyltyl. "Where are their wives? Weren't they married?"

"Of course they were," said Granny Tyl, "or where should we all be? But there's nothing for us women to do to-day. The men choose the women and the women the men. When Mytyl comes to look for a husband, it will be our turn."

"Look," said Tyltyl, "here are three more."

Three very unpleasant figures now appeared. The first was a diseased man, coming out of the hospital; the next seemed rather tipsy: he carried a bundle and came staggering out of the ale-house; and the third was a hairy, savage-looking man, brandishing a blood-stained knife.

Gaffer Tyl seemed dismayed when he saw them approaching:

"I don't like this," he said. "It's very tiresome that they should have been told."

"Why, who are they?" asked Tyltyl.

"An ugly lot, those three," said Gaffer Tyl. "The sick man, the drunkard and the murderer. They've done us a lot of harm."

"Then there was a murderer in the family?"

"Of course, as in every family. Fortunately, none of the three has much influence over us. As you see, they are small and sickly. They shrink and shrink as the centuries go on; and they are nothing like as strong and healthy as the others. But it won't do for them to meddle in your choice. . . . If the Great Peasant, the Great Beggar-man and the Great Ancestor are there, all will go well: the others will not dare to breathe a word; if not, they will try to force a choice upon you and that will be a bad thing for you and for the future of the entire family."

The door of the old farm-house opened; and through it came a tall peasant, dressed in the style of the Middle Ages. He closed the door behind him carefully and strode forward, whittling a switch as he went.

"Here comes the Great Peasant," said Gaffer Tyl.
"That's good, that's good!"

"That long, thin fellow?" asked Tyltyl.

"He certainly isn't very stout," said Gaffer Tyl, "but he's none the worse for that. He wields great influence; and he's one of the mainstays of the family."

The next to arrive were one or two Roman settlers from the Roman villa. Then, from the back of the long street, came some men of the Stone Age, which is the age, thousands and thousands of years ago, before metals had been discovered and when axes and knives were made of flint. Among these was an exceedingly tall old man, dressed in skins and leaning on a heavy club. He looked so wild that Tyltyl exclaimed:

“Why, we’re getting right back to savages now!”

“That’s the one!” said Gaffer Tyl.

“Who?”

“The Great Ancestor!”

“What? The one looking like an ape, with the big stick?”

“You *must* be quiet, Tyltyl!” said his grandfather. “Don’t treat him with disrespect. It’s a great favour that he’s showing you; he doesn’t often go out. Of all our race, he’s the most important, the greatest, the most respected. . . . Everything’s shaping well: it’ll probably be he, the Great Peasant and the Great Beggar-man who will put their heads together and choose your bride for you.”

THE ANCESTORS NOW CAME SLOWLY FORWARD TO WHERE TYLTYL
WAS WAITING



"But I won't have that!" exclaimed Tyltyl, indignantly. "It doesn't concern them! What do they know about it? A peasant, a beggar and a savage: what next?"

"Hold your tongue, I say!" Gaffer Tyl answered, sternly. "I tell you, they stand for all that is best in you and in the whole family. If you obey them, if you submit to their influence, you will always be happy and safe. . . . Mind yourself now! They're coming! . . ."

The Ancestors had gradually been gathering together. They bowed, spoke to one another, shook hands, exchanged compliments and greetings. All showed the greatest respect and regard to the Great Peasant, the Great Beggarman and especially the Great Ancestor, and stood around them and listened with attention to what they had to say. On the other hand, the Sick Man, the Drunkard and the Murderer were left in a corner by themselves, where nobody took the very least notice of them.

The others now came slowly forward to the benches where Tyltyl was waiting with his companions:

The Great Ancestor raised his voice:

"Good-evening, Tyltyl!" he said.

"Good-evening . . . sir!" said Tyltyl, feeling a little scared.

"Shake hands," said the Great Ancestor. "Don't be afraid of me. I look rather savage, I dare say; but it is only a shape which I had to put on in order to make myself visible to you. I had no other handy. . . . I am quite clean really; and I don't smell bad."

"I never said you did!" Tyltyl protested.

"No," said the Great Ancestor, sitting down on the middle bench, "but, judging by the face you pulled, you weren't so very certain! . . . I will sit down here; the Great Beggar-man will take his seat on my right and the Great Peasant on my left. They don't smell either."

The two whom he had named came and sat on either side of him; and the other Ancestors went and stood in a group behind them.

"You come over here, Tyltyl," said the Great Ancestor, drawing him to him. "I'm glad to hold you close to me for a moment. We have known each other for so long!"

"But I don't remember ever seeing you before!" said Tyltyl.

"And yet," said the Great Ancestor, "we have always lived in each other, for you were already living in me when I was on earth; and now I live in you, while you are still on that same earth, which we seem to have quitted. . . . But what do you think of this place of ours? Permit me to have the pleasure of showing you over your home."

"My home?" said Tytyl.

"Certainly. You are at home here. And a very nice home it is. Everything you see—this square, that prison, the church, those houses and we who live in them—all this is really only inside yourself. People seldom know it; they don't even suspect it; but it's true, for all that."

"I should never have thought that there was so much room inside myself and that it was so large."

"It's much larger really," said the Great Ancestor, "there's a great deal that you don't see. . . . But this is not what interests us to-day; let us come straight to the point, to the important question that brings you here. We are going to choose the woman whom you are to love."

"Since you are so kind," said Tytyl, "there's one thing that I should like to ask you.

"Ask me as many questions as you please," said the Great Ancestor.

"How is it that I have not, like other men, the right to choose the woman I love?"

"But you have the right to choose and are here for the sole purpose of making that choice."

"No," said Tytyl, "they tell me that it's you and the others who will make it for me."

"But I and the others are all you," said the Great Ancestor. "You are we; and we are you; and it's all the same thing."

"It's not the same thing to me," said Tytyl, sticking to his guns. "They keep on telling me to hold my tongue and saying that it's not my affair, that it's no concern of mine. Everybody's allowed to get a word in, except me. I've had enough of it, I'm sick and tired of it! Where do I come in? That's what I want to know!"

"You're simply acting," said the Great Ancestor, "as all men act when they think that they are doing what they want to do."

"Tyltyl became just a little tempersome :

"But, after all, dash it," he cried, "what business is it of yours? I can understand, in a way, that the children I may one day have should claim some right to select their mother; but the rest of you, up here, what difference can it make to you?"

"Don't you see that it's all the same?" said the Great Ancestor, patiently. "Those who have lived in you live in you still, just as much as those who are going to. There is no difference, it all hangs together and it's still the same family."

"As you please," said Tyltyl, "but I can't make it out. . . . And, if I refuse to obey, if I love somebody just for myself, if I take a different girl from the one they want to force on me, what will they do then? What will happen?"

"Merely this," said the Great Ancestor, "that the choice which you will have made for yourself, without our approval, will not be a real choice. In other words, you will not love the woman whom you thought you loved. You will have made a mistake, you will be unhappy and, at the same time, you will make every one of

us unhappy: those who came before you as well as those who come after you."

"Does that often happen?"

"It does, I'm sorry to say, and far too often; and that is why you see so many unhappy people on earth."

"Well, what am I to do?" asked Tytyl.

"Where are your little friends?" said the Great Ancestor. "Would you mind coming a little nearer, ladies?"

The six girls came forward and stood in a row before the Great Ancestor, who gazed at them long and attentively. Then he turned to Tytyl again:

"Well, well," he said, "you have set us our task, but you have made it very difficult. How is one to select when they are all of them equally beautiful?"

"They are really very handsome," said the Great Beggar-man, speaking for the first time.

"And they appear to be very healthy," said the Great Peasant, likewise joining in, "very quiet and very hard-working."

"Do you recognize the one for whom we are waiting?" asked the Great Ancestor.

"Not yet," said the Great Beggar-man.

"It's strange, neither do I," said the Great Ancestor.
"Do you?" he asked, addressing the Great Peasant.

"I can't say that I don't," was the answer, "and I can't say that I do."

"It's strange," repeated the Great Ancestor, "very strange. And yet we know that the one who will make us happy has arrived and is here among us. We generally recognize her at the first glance."

"I can't understand it," said the Great Beggar-man.

The Rich Ancestor, who was standing behind the bench, now spoke. Pointing to Rosarelle, he asked:

"Isn't that the one? . . . What's your name, my dear?"

"Rosarelle," she answered.

"Who are you?" asked the Rich Ancestor.

"I am the daughter of the mayor."

"Are you rich?"

"My father has money, I believe."

"You see?" said the Rich Ancestor. "I thought so. There is no doubt about it."

Of course, as the richest of the Ancestors, he consid-

ered that the richest girl would make the best wife for Tylytyl.

And now the others began to make their choice, according to their different qualities. The Sick Ancestor pointed to Aimette, who looked so white and pale, because of the flour with which she was covered, and declared:

“I say it’s that one.”

“This is the one I want,” said the Drunken Ancestor, taking hold of Roselle, because she was the inn-keeper’s daughter and was used to serving out drinks to the customers.

“And I take this one!” said the Murderer Ancestor, leaping over the bench and clutching hold of Belline, because she was the butcher’s daughter and carried a knife and was accustomed to helping her father with the sheep and calves.

But the Great Ancestor rose in his wrath and waved his hand:

“Be silent . . . and withdraw!” he said, in a tone which admitted of no denial. “Begone! You know

that you have lost the right to raise your voice in my presence!"

The four Ancestors thus addressed moved away crest-fallen. But the other Ancestors grouped behind the bench clapped their hands in applause:

"Hear, hear!" they cried. "Well said! Well done! It serves them right! They have been wrong too often, they have made too many mistakes! . . . They have done too much harm as it is! . . . They would be the ruin of the family if they had their way!"

And now the girls began to plead their own cause. Jalline, the beggar's daughter, threw herself before the Great Beggar-man, clasped his knees in her arms and said:

"Perhaps I'm the one. . . . I love him so!"

And Milette, the woodcutter's daughter, threw herself before the Great Peasant, clasped his knees in her arms and said:

"If you want to know how much I love Tytyl, look down at me and see."

And Aimette, the miller's daughter, who was very

sweet and gentle, threw herself before the Great Ancestor himself, clasped his knees in her arms and said:

"Can't you see that I have loved him the longest? I have loved him since I first set eyes on him. I never dared say so; but I feel that I shall die if you choose another."

"My poor children," said the Great Ancestor, "it is very sad, but my hands are tied. You will perhaps know a little sorrow and will shed tears for a few hours; but, if we were to choose one of you, she would have sorrow all her days and spend her whole life in tears, for I do not see among you the one for whom we are waiting. . . . Tytyl!"

"Yes?" said Tytyl.

"Have you brought us no one else, besides those whom we see here?"

"No, no one else."

"I see a tall, white figure over there, against a tree," said the Great Beggar-man. "Who is it?"

"I really don't know," said Tytyl. "She follows us all the time and squeezes in wherever we go. Nobody knows her; and we can't get rid of her."

THE GREAT ANCESTOR TOLD HIM TO GO AND FETCH HER; AND TYLTYL
WENT TO THE VEILED GIRL AND LED HER BACK BY THE HAND



The Great Ancestor told him to go and fetch her; and Tytyl went to the Veiled Girl and led her back by the hand.

"Who are you?" asked the Great Ancestor.

"It's no use asking her," said Tytyl. "She never answers; she can't talk."

"Come nearer, child," the Great Ancestor said to her, "and let me lift the veil that covers your face."

He removed the veil; and the statue's face appeared. It was white as marble, absolutely featureless and devoid of all expression.

"She has no face," said the Great Ancestor. "Do you know her?" he asked, addressing the other Ancestors standing around them.

"She has no expression," said the Great Peasant.

"She has no features," said the Great Beggar-man. "She is like an unfinished statue."

"What are we to do?" said the Great Ancestor. "It must be she. But who is she? She is not dead, or we should know it. . . . Come, Tytyl, make an effort, for everything depends on you. You *must* remember."

"But I can't," said Tytyl. "I have tried my very best. Do what I will, I can't remember at all."

"Listen," said the Great Ancestor, "this is a serious matter. If we do not succeed in recognizing her, all your life, all your happiness on earth will be nothing more than a shadowy phantom like herself. . . . There is one last resource, one last hope, which is that the children who are to be born to you may discover who she is and that she is to be their mother. They see much farther and deeper than we do. But there is no time to lose, for this waiting and this living in suspense are very dangerous for her. We must be quick, therefore; we must not lose a moment. . . . Go, young Tytyl. You have been very good and patient, very obedient and faithful to your race throughout this ordeal. Good-bye and good luck to you. . . . And you too, my dears, let me give you a parting kiss. Do not be too sad. Another happiness awaits you, for there is more than one kind on that earth of yours. You have deserved every happiness that it can give. . . . Good-bye, my dear daughters; good-bye, good-bye, my son. And we will

meet again whenever you wish: you know where to find us and we shall be waiting for you."

When the Great Ancestor had finished speaking, the rocks closed up again; and Tytyl, the girls, Light and Destiny were once more alone among the boulders. Then Destiny seized Tytyl's hand:

"This way, this way!" he shouted. "Thanks to me, it went off very well! I said nothing about it; but it was I who foresaw everything and planned everything; and all that has been done was ordained by me! . . ."

And they all went off to where the children lived.

THE CHILDREN

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CHAPTER V

THE CHILDREN

TYLTYL and Light were out in the open, high up in the mountains, under a blue sky all spangled with stars.

“Where are we?” asked he.

“Quite close to the stars,” she replied, “and yet within yourself. Before you is the great veil of the Milky Way. Beyond it stretches the region in which your unborn children are waiting to show you the mother whom they have chosen.”

“It’s a little like the Kingdom of the Future in *The Blue Bird*,” said Tyltyl; and so it was.

“Perhaps,” said Light, “and yet it is not exactly the same thing. There it was the whole kingdom, with everybody’s children in it; here it is only a province, with no children in it except yours.”

“Have I many?” asked Tyltyl.

“You have as many children and children’s children

and children's children's children as you have ancestors," said Light. "There is no end to them. But, as with the Ancestors, we shall see only those who are nearest to you, especially the youngest and smallest."

"Why the smallest?"

"Because they are nearest to their birth. As the time for this approaches, they grow smaller and younger, so that the youngest, who are the first to be born, can hardly walk or stand."

"And the others?" asked Tyltyl. "Are there any big ones?"

"There are children of all sizes," said Light, "but I do not know that we shall see the biggest, that is to say, those who will be born hundreds or thousands of years hence. There will not have been time to tell them; they do not keep close to the doors, like the very little ones, but wander far away, waiting for their time to come."

"How tiresome they must find it, to be kept waiting like that!" said Tyltyl.

"Not at all," said Light. "Nothing is ever tiresome

in time that has neither beginning nor end. Besides, they have to learn up here all that they will forget on earth."

"Then it seems hardly worth while to take the trouble to learn it!"

"Oh, but it is! Something always remains of what we have learnt and helps us to build up the deep happiness of life."

"Well," said Tytyl, gaily, "so much the better for them! As for me, I shall soon know what I am to do. I hope we shall get through to-day, because, you see, I'd like to have things settled. . . . But what has become of those girls of mine and Destiny? Oh, there they are!" he cried, looking down below him. "The poor little darlings are up to their knees in the snow. This place is even higher and more difficult to get at than where the Ancestors live."

Light looked down too:

"They are not very far away," she said. "But you have taken off your hat again: that is *such* a bad habit of yours! Put it on quickly, before they come; and be

careful to make no mistake this time and not to turn the sapphire the wrong way, for, if you do, you may find it very unpleasant."

Tyltyl put on his hat and turned the sapphire, but in doing so made another silly blunder. The result was that out of the earth and from every side little creatures of different sizes appeared. They were all dressed like Tyltyl and looked like him and were like him in every way: a whole pack of little Tyltyls in fact. They surrounded him, rushed against him, jostled and hustled him and tried to drag him, some to the right and some to the left, while he struggled in the midst of them, without knowing which of them to shake off first.

He was at an utter loss what to do.

"Hullo, hullo!" he cried. "What's all this? What does it mean? Really, that sapphire is becoming impossible!"

"Don't worry," said Light. "You'll have turned it the wrong way again, in spite of my warning. What did you do?"

"How can I tell?" said Tyltyl. "This is getting too

much for me! I don't know where I am. . . . I must have pressed it instead of turning it."

"That's what I thought," said Light. "You have simply set free some of your other 'You's.' "

Tyltyl did not understand a word of this:

"Some of my other 'Me's'?" he asked.

"Yes," said Light. "What I mean is that you are not alone inside yourself and that . . ."

"I am not alone inside myself?" repeated Tyltyl, more bewildered than ever.

"Why, no, there are a number of other people inside you, more or less like you and all the time trying to gain the upper hand."

"No, but seriously," said Tyltyl, "what also is there inside me? I must be a sort of menagerie or Noah's ark! There's no end to it!"

"That's true enough," said Light. "There would be no end to it if we had the time to go into it thoroughly. But press the sapphire down now and you'll see that all will be well."

Tyltyl pressed the sapphire and his other 'Me's' all disappeared.

"My word!" he said. "A good riddance! . . . Well, as you say, they may be the least bit like me, but some of them are jolly ugly. Particularly a big dark one, who kept on tripping me up and very nearly made me fall."

"There are some of all kinds, of course," said Light, "as there are in every man. One has to learn to choose the best of them and avoid the worst. . . . But here come your little friends."

The first to arrive this time was the Veiled Girl. Tyltyl was quite amazed when he caught sight of her:

"Hullo!" he exclaimed. "What's happened to her? She seems quite in a hurry to-day; and she moves like an angel!"

Next came Milette, Belline, Rosarelle and Roselle, followed by Aimette and Jalline, who were supporting Destiny between them, helping him to walk. He had grown smaller than ever and was now at least a head shorter than Tyltyl. He was wearing the same black cape and sombrero hat and he looked tired out. The moment he came up to Tyltyl, he sank down on a heap of snow.

"Are you ill?" asked Tytyl, kindly, going up to him a little anxiously.

"I?" said Destiny. "Not at all: I am always the same. I never change. . . . But, when a fellow bears all the responsibility for everything that occurs, when he has to manage everything, direct everything and foresee everything and when nobody helps him"—here he cast an angry glance at Light—"then he's entitled to a moment's rest. I therefore order a halt. It is decided beyond recall: to-day we go no farther."

"That will do admirably," said Light, "for, as it happens, we have arrived; and, with Destiny's permission, we shall find ourselves, without taking another step, among the children who are waiting for us."

She had no sooner finished speaking than the Milky Way moved farther back, revealing the immense halls, the lofty vaults and the endless vistas of the Kingdom of the Future in *The Children's Blue Bird*. Only this time, as it was the nuptial hour, the arches and columns and everything, instead of being blue, were of a soft, milky white, gleaming and transparent. A radiant, amber-

coloured light bathed in unspeakable gladness all the things that it touched; and there were signs of deep and infinite joy on every side. The boundless horizon stretched towards the veiled white of the Milky Way and all the other stars, known and unknown, which hung twinkling in the sky.

Tyltyl, Light, Destiny and the six girls were now standing at the foot of one of the alabaster columns supporting the entrance-arch. They took a few steps forward into the huge, empty hall, while the Veiled Girl hid shyly behind the column. Tyltyl was a little disappointed at what he saw:

“There’s nobody here!” he exclaimed.

“I know why it is,” said Light. “There are several doors; and, as you were all very tired, I chose the nearest. The children are most likely waiting for us at the principal entrance.”

“How shall we let them know that we have come?” asked Tyltyl.

“The atmosphere will see to that for us,” said Light. “Here everything is known at once and everything happens everywhere at the same moment.”

"I like this place," said Tytyl. "A very fine place I call it: splendid large rooms and a good high ceiling, with lots of light and air."

"And it's still always inside yourself," said Light.

"What, is this inside me too?"

"Why, yes, of course it is."

"Very well, then: that's all right," said Tytyl. "Pray walk in: you're very welcome. Won't you take a seat while you wait?"

"We shall not have long to wait," said Light, "for I believe that they have seen us."

A child's head showed for a moment between two of the columns. Then it was briskly drawn back and a voice exclaimed:

"This way! This way! They're here!"

Soon after, seven or eight children, about twelve years of age, dressed in short white tunics, with bare legs and feet, came running up from the back of the hall and stopped in front of the visitors. The biggest of them held out his hand to Tytyl:

"Good-evening, grandpapa!" said the child.

"Grandpapa? Who's that?" asked Tytyl. "Where is he?"

The little boy burst out laughing:

"Where is he? Why, it's you!" he said.

Never in his life was Tytyl so taken aback:

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed. "Am I a grandpapa already?"

"Of course you are," said the boy, "eight times over! We are the first to arrive. The others are on their way. . . . He doesn't seem to believe it!" he added, turning to the other children.

Another of them stepped forward and said:

"You might give me a kiss!"

"I will! I will!" said Tytyl. "But how do I come to be a grandpapa?"

"Surely that's quite simple," said the first child. "You will be our grandpapa when we are your grandchildren."

"Well, obviously, that's clear enough," said Tytyl. "So you exist already?"

"Naturally, since you yourself exist," said the child. "I say, are those the grandmamas you're bringing us?"

"Yes," said Tytyl, "I'm told that you're to pick out the best one."

Here another child began to clap his hands and skip about with delight:

"Oh, how pretty they are!" he cried.

Then he threw himself into Jalline's arms:

"I take this one," he said, "because she is so gentle and soft."

But another put his arms round Aimette's neck:

"And I take this one," he said, "because she looks so sad."

But another kissed Roselle and said:

"I choose this one, because she is always laughing."

And three more each took one of the other girls, kissing and fondling her and laughing and dancing for joy:

"I choose this one, because she smells so nice."

"I choose this one."

"I this one."

But now the first child interfered:

"One moment," he said, "one moment, *if* you please! This has nothing to do with us at all. Our turn will come later. You know that only the smallest have the

right to choose who shall be their mother. All that we have to do is to help them with our advice and to stop them if they make a mistake; but that's a thing which has never happened yet. They were quite a distance away, at the principal gate, but they won't be long now."

Meanwhile some bigger children came along. They looked about fifteen years of age. The oldest of them went up to Tyltyl and shook hands with him:

"Good-evening, great-grandfather!" he said.

"Oh, so I'm a great-grandfather now?" said Tyltyl.

"Of course you are!" said the boy. "I'm very glad to see you for a minute or two, for there's no great chance of our meeting on earth. . . . Well, I understand that your visit to the Ancestors was not much of a success."

"I'd rather put it this way," said Tyltyl, "that they hadn't quite made up their minds. But how is it that you already know what happened there?"

"Why, of course, we know everything that goes on inside you," said the boy. "We're there ourselves. Besides, there's very little that separates us from the Ancestors. Our interests are the same; and our paths in life very often meet."

"Look out!" said the twelve-year-old boy, the one who had first spoken. "Here are the little ones. I see five coming. There's only one missing, the smallest of them all."

Five little children came walking hand in hand, in a row, from the back of the hall.

"Who are those five little ones?" asked Tytyl. "They are very sweet."

"Why, they are your children!" said young Twelve-year-old. "Two boys and three girls!"

"Mine?" said Tytyl. "Shall I have five children?"

"Six," said the boy, "you will have six, for the last little one isn't here yet. . . . I promise you, the world can do with them, after what people down there have been up to."

Tytyl understood that he was referring to the horrors of the Great War and all the terrible slaughter which it had occasioned. Never was there greater need in the world for many children.

"But I shall never be able to feed them all!" he said, in some alarm.

Meantime, the five little ones, still holding hands, had

stopped in front of the six girls. And, while they stood looking at them solemnly, without speaking, gradually the hall became filled with a crowd of other children, who gathered round the five little ones and watched them. The silence at last was more than Tytyl could bear; he felt that he must speak; and he said:

“Well, children, aren’t you going to kiss your papa?”

But the youngest of the five lifted its finger very seriously, as though to order him to be silent. Then it said:

“Mamma first. Where is she?”

“Why, she must be here!” said Tytyl. “She’s one of these. You have only to make your choice.”

“Do you see her?” said the youngest of the five to the next youngest, standing beside him.

“No, I don’t,” said the next youngest, shaking its head sadly.

“No more do I,” said each of the other three, speaking one after the other.

But Jalline rushed forward, caught hold of one of the children and kissed it:

“Oh, that’s impossible!” she cried. “Here, look at me! Don’t you see how I love you?”

"Yes," said the child, "but you're not the one."

Then Roselle took another of the children on her knees:

"And me?" she asked. "Won't you have me for your mamma?"

"No, no, it's not you," said the child.

"And me?" said Rosabelle, taking hold of another child. "Don't you love me? You'll see how happy we shall be! We shall have a lovely house full of toys and I will give you everything you want."

But even this prospect did not tempt the child, which was bound to see things as they were; and, though it shed a tear or two at the thought of not having a rich mother, it said, firmly: "No, no, no, no!"

Then Belline took the youngest child:

"Look here," she said, "you appear to know more than the others. Don't you recognize me? Are you fond of sweets?"

But the youngest child was frightened of the butcher's daughter and did not care for her at all and cried out lustily and struggled till she put it down. And it screamed:

"Let me go! Let me go!"

"This is a pretty business!" said Tyltyl. "Here's the youngest crying! And the other one as well! . . . But what do they want? They're very hard to please!"

Then the youngest of the five wiped his eyes and took the hand of the next, who did the same by the next, and so on until they had all joined hands again.

"Come!" said the youngest of the five.

And the five little children, very quietly and with great dignity, moved away.

"What's the matter with them?" asked Tyltyl. "Where are they going?"

"They are going to the other door," said one of the big children.

"They are going to fetch the smallest of them all," said another.

"The smaller they are, the more they know," said a third.

"But where is he, the smallest of them all?" asked the first of the big children. "Haven't you seen him?"

"No," said another, "no one has seen him since this

morning. And that's strange, for he's always with his little sisters."

"What a lot of them there are!" said Tyltyl, looking at the crowd of children filling the halls.

"It's only a part of the family," said one of the big children.

Now another one had been following the five little children with his eyes:

"They are stopping at the third door," he said.

"Who are?" asked Tyltyl.

"The five little ones," said the child.

"They seem to be looking for something," said another.

"Let us go and see what they are doing," said the first of the big children. "They know what they know."

And the others said:

"Yes, yes, let us all go. . . . They know! They know!"

There was a great stir among the children. They all ran in the same direction; and in a moment the hall was

empty of all except Tyltyl, Light, the six girls and Destiny.

Then Tyltyl said:

“Let us go after them too.”

And he went out, followed by Light and the six girls, with Destiny bringing up the rear.

The only one left was the Veiled Girl, whom everybody had overlooked and who had never moved from the column against which she stood leaning.

A little time passed; and then, right from the back of the furthest hall, came a tiny child, not much more than a baby and even smaller than the youngest of the five little ones. He came walking along with a firm and resolute step; then, when he reached the columns where our friends had been standing, he turned his head to right and left and appeared to be taking his bearings. Suddenly, he went straight to the Veiled Girl, stopped and took up his stand in front of her and gazed at her for a long time, gravely and silently, with his finger in his mouth. At last he put out his hand and took the Veiled Girl by the hem of her dress:

“Is it . . . is it really you?” he asked.

And now the Veiled Girl spoke for the first time. She had to struggle to find her voice: it seemed to come from far away and to stick in her throat. And all she said was:

"Yes."

"I knew it," said the smallest of them all. "Come!"

"Where to?" asked the Veiled Girl.

"Over there," he said. "I'm going to tell the others."

"Not yet," she said. "I don't feel equal to it yet, I can't."

"Come!" said the child once more, dragging her to a marble bench between the columns.

He made her sit down, settled her comfortably on the bench and petted and kissed her:

"Come," he said, "it's you, I know it. . . . I'm kissing you. Don't you know how to kiss?"

The Veiled Girl shook her head.

"Don't you really?" said the smallest of them all. "It's like this. I'll teach you."

And he kissed and petted her again, very slowly and deliberately. Then he asked:

"Are you no longer cold now?"

"No," said the Veiled Girl, smiling at last.

"You see, you're better already," said the smallest of them all.

Under his kisses and caresses, the statue that she was had gradually come to life: her eyes opened, her lips fluttered, her face, which had been so white, began to take colour, her figure lost its stiffness and her arms became supple and circled round the little one's neck.

"You *are* better, aren't you?" asked the smallest of them all, snuggling against her. "You're not sleepy any more? . . . How good it is, being together! . . . They're still looking for you, you know. . . . But I knew, I knew and it's I who found you!"

"I knew also," said the Veiled Girl. "I was only waiting."

"It's splendid, isn't it?" said the smallest of them all, nestling still more closely. "Oh, what fun! Do you like it too?"

"Yes," said she, "I am happy."

"Why aren't you laughing?" he asked.

"Because I am too happy."

"So am I, so am I! . . . Don't look: I'm going to cry a little; but it doesn't mean anything."

"I'm going to cry too," said the Veiled Girl, who now began to return his kisses and caresses.

"Oh, you're kissing me!" exclaimed the smallest of them all. "Mummy! Mummy! . . . Then it's true, it's true, it *is* you? . . . Kiss me again! Again! No, not any more: I can't bear it! . . . Will they understand, will they be able to understand?"

"Call them," said his mother, for that was who she was. "It is time."

"Don't cover your face," said the smallest of them all. "They wouldn't see it and they wouldn't believe me."

He drew aside her veils:

"Oh, mummy, how lovely you are!"

Her hair came loose and spread all over her shoulders.

"Oh, mummy, your hair! What lots of it! . . . There, that's much better, I can kiss you better so. . . . Listen, they're coming back. They're here!"

The five little ones came running helter-skelter into the hall:

"Where is she?" they cried. "Where is she? Where is she?"

Then the smallest of them all stood up on the bench, beside his mother, showing her to the others and dancing with delight:

"Here! Here! Here!" he cried. "She's here, she's here! . . . I found her!"

The mother tried to rise and take them in her arms, but they did not give her time. They simply flung themselves upon her, loaded her with kisses and caresses, made her sit down again and clambered on her knees, swarming and scrambling all over her and all speaking together:

"It's she!"

"It's she!"

"It's mummy!"

"Where was she?"

"Did you know her?"

"I should think so! I should think so!"

"You too?"

"Yes, I too, I too!"

"You're taking up all the room!"

"You're kissing her all the time!"

THEY FLUNG THEMSELVES UPON HER, LOADED HER WITH KISSES AND
CARESSES, AND CLAMBERED ON HER KNEES



"It's not fair, it's my turn! She's my mummy too!"

"We looked for you so hard!"

"We waited for you so long!"

"She is lovely, isn't she? She's the loveliest of them all!"

"There's no one like her."

"I love you, mummy! Do you love me?"

"Kiss, kiss, kiss, kiss!"

"To think one didn't know!"

"You're everything in the world to us, we're everything in the world to you!"

"I love you so!"

"I say, do you know me? I shall be the second!"

"And I the third!"

"And I the last! Kiss me first, I shall have longest to wait."

"She's laughing, she's laughing! Oh, what fun, what fun! She's happy too!"

"Answer us, speak to us!"

"Your arm, your arm, I want to feel your arm around my neck!"

"Mine too, mine too!"

"Don't go away, whatever you do!"

While the six little ones were fussing over their mother and kissing and petting her and all laughing and talking together, the other children, the bigger ones, Tyltyl's grandchildren and great-grandchildren, began to come back, until they filled the great halls again. Those in front gathered round the group formed by the mother and the six little ones; and there were whispers from every side:

"They've found her! They've found her!"

"It's she!"

"How happy they are!"

"How beautiful she is!"

"How sweet she looks!"

"Can we kiss her too?"

"Wait, wait, it's their turn now. Ours will come."

Then Tyltyl entered the hall, followed by Light, the six girls and Destiny. The big children made way for him to pass. But, of the little ones, the smallest of them all was the first to see him and, taking him by the hand, led him to the mother and said, gravely:

"It's she. I found her."

Then the mother rose from her seat and stood in front of Tytyl.

"Do you recognize her?" asked another of the little ones.

"Not yet," said Tytyl, passing his hand over his forehead and vainly searching his memory. "But she's beautiful!"

"Kiss her; it's she," said a second little one.

"There is no other," said a third.

"We want no other," said the smallest of them all.

And still poor Tytyl did not know his bride. He took her hand, however, and asked:

"Where do you come from? Who are you? Where have I seen you before? I can't remember, I can't remember. . . ."

The mother did not reply. But her colour came and went, her eyes opened and shut and her life seemed to be endangered by the effort which she was making to awaken his memory.

"Take care!" shouted the youngest of them all. "You're hurting her!"

Thereupon the other little ones drew up and formed a

line in front of her, as though to guard and protect her.

“Go away!” said one.

“Go away!” said another. “You sha’n’t have her until you know her!”

“And you sha’n’t have any other!” said the third.

“Go away!” said a fourth. “She shall stay with us till you know her!”

“Go away!” said the fifth. “We’ll wait for you, we shall all be down there!”

“Go away, go away!” cried the first little one. “You’re hurting her dreadfully!”

But the sixth, who was the smallest of them all, put his arms round his mother and said:

“Come, mummy, come! He doesn’t know you yet!”

They all gathered and pressed closely round their mother, hurrying and dragging her along. But they waved good-bye to Tyltyl and called out:

“See you again! See you soon again! . . . Down there, down there! . . . See you soon!”

The mother turned and gazed fixedly at Tyltyl. Then everything grew dark, things lost their shape and colour and everything disappeared from view, except the

sky with the Milky Way and the other stars. Tylyl, Light, the six girls and Destiny were left standing alone.

“Well, I’m in a pretty pickle!” said Tylyl. “What am I to do? Is it my fault if I can’t remember?”

“Don’t be afraid,” said Light. “The little ones know what they are saying. You will find her again. . . . Let us go, quickly! I am sure that she is waiting for you where you least expect her.”

“She really is beautiful!” said Tylyl, dreamily. “I believe they are right. I feel sure that it’s really she.”

THE LEAVE-TAKING

CHAPTER VI

THE LEAVE-TAKING

ONCE again Tytyl and Light came walking along together; but this time it was not in the mountains but on the edge of a forest.

"Here we are at last," said Light.

"Where?" asked Tytyl.

"Why, near your home!" said Light. "Don't you recognize your own forest?"

"My forest, my forest?" Tytyl repeated, looking around him. "Why, gracious, so it is! I've seen those beeches before, somewhere."

"That's more than likely," said Light, "considering that they're close to the house where you were born."

"Well, it's about time that I did get home," said Tytyl. "I am simply tired out."

"It has been a fatiguing journey, but not without results," said Light.

"Results?" said Tytyl. "What results? Where? When we started, I was in love with six girls; now that

we've returned, I love only one; and she's just the one who hasn't come back with us. . . . But where are the other six and what are they doing? And Destiny too? He *was* looking so ill, poor fellow!"

At that moment the six girls arrived. Jalline, who came last, was carrying Destiny in her arms. He still wore his cloak and his sombrero, but had shrunk so that he was now no bigger than quite a wee child. And he was looking awfully, awfully tired.

Jalline passed him to Milette and said:

"Would you mind taking him for a little while? He's not very big but dreadfully heavy."

"Very well," said Milette, taking Destiny from Jalline's arms. "Come to me, my little Tinny-Tiny, come; there, don't cry."

Destiny now spoke in a little whining, lisping baby voice, though he still used those long, important words:

"Me?" he said. "I never cwyl! I am alwayth the thame! I'm unthakable, immovable, indefatigable, implacable and inegthowable!"

"Yes, yes, Tiny," said Milette, "we know, you're a very good little boy. . . . Look, he's gone to sleep!"

And so he had, fast asleep in her arms!

Jalline wrapped him in his cape, like the motherly little creature that she was:

“He’s a dear, sweet, obedient little thing,” she said, “but it’s easy to see that he’s very tired.”

“Poor little Destiny!” said Light. “He has no luck! But we can’t trouble about him just now. What we have to do, dear children, is to bid one another good-bye . . . and for the last time.”

“For the last time!” exclaimed Tytyl.

“Why, yes; we can’t spend our whole life travelling! Besides, you are near your homes, because all of you live round the forest. We have learnt what we went out to learn and we know what we wanted to know, that man is granted only one real love and the others are merely unhappy blunders, which bring sorrow to numberless lives. . . . You were all of you going to choose wrong; and you may well rejoice, therefore, even now, when we are about to part, that the mistake was discovered before it was too late. . . . And, more than this, the Fairy has charged me with glad tidings for each of you: the one real love which all of you have sought is waiting for you

by your own fireside, in your own home, or at least will be there very soon. So do not linger, but hasten to meet it. The hour grows late; soon the cocks will be crowing; the birds in the trees are beginning to awake. Let us bid one another good-bye, quickly, without sad thoughts or tears. . . .”

Milette handed Destiny to Aimette and asked her to hold him for a minute, while she kissed Tyltyl good-bye. Then she said:

“Good-bye, Tyltyl dear. I must go first. Dad gets up so early; and there would be terrible trouble if he didn’t find me in the house. One more kiss. And be nice to me when we meet: we are neighbours, after all, and shall have to spend all our lives in the forest.”

Tyltyl kissed her affectionately and said:

“Be nice to you, Milette? Of course I shall! It’s not your fault or mine: we both know that.”

“Good-bye, good-bye!” said Milette. “I must fly!”

And off she ran as fast as her legs would carry her. Then Aimette handed Destiny to Jalline and asked her to hold the little man for a second, while *she* kissed Tyltyl good-bye. And she said:

"Good-bye, Tytyl. Don't let us forget each other altogether. I may love somebody else some day; but, believe me, I loved you very fondly."

"Come, come," said Light, kindly, "you are wasting time. We shall never have done if we go on like this. If the cock crows before you return, your fathers and mothers will know everything; and then they'll be angry. . . . Just give him a sisterly kiss: that's all that's necessary. You're not going far; and you'll meet again many a time, in real life, and will like each other all the better because of your truer knowledge."

Rosarelle and Belline now kissed Tytyl without speaking and went away as Aimette had done. Roselle, on the other hand, blew her nose vigorously, dabbed at her eyes with her handkerchief and spluttered:

"My dear Tytyl! He was so nice! . . . I shall see you again, sha'n't I, I shall see you again? You shall have the best of everything at the inn."

Then she rushed off; and Jalline alone lingered behind, still holding Destiny in her arms.

"Well, Jalline, what are you doing here?" asked Light.

"I can't go away at once, like the others!"

"But you must, dear Jalline, you must indeed! Good-bye, Jalline darling. You have been very sweet, very loving, very charming; and I thought at one time that you would be chosen. . . . Don't cry, dear. Hand over poor little Destiny to me, I will take care of him; and give Tylyl a long, long kiss."

Jalline handed Destiny to Light and gave Tylyl a long kiss.

"Good-bye, Jalline!" said Tylyl.

And Jalline, the beggar's little daughter, moved away with slow, reluctant steps, sobbing as she went.

"And now that we are alone," said Light, "let me kiss you too. We shall meet once again to take another and a longer journey."

"Another journey? And a longer one?"

"The last, the happiest and the most beautiful of all," said Light. "But I am not allowed to speak of it yet."

No more am I, for the present. But, if you have enjoyed the story of this journey and of the one which you read before, I hope one day to tell you the story of the last wonderful journey as well.

"Good-bye, Tylyl," Light went on to say. "Remem-

ber, dear, that you are not alone in this world and that all that you see has neither beginning nor end. With this thought in your heart, you will always know, whatever may happen, the right thing to say, the right thing to do and the right thing to hope for. . . . And you, Tiny, don't cry like that! Some day we shall begin to understand each other."

Destiny, still half-asleep, whined and lisped:

"Me? I wathn't cwying! I never cwyl! . . . I order a thtop! . . . Forward! Forward! Forward!"

Then Light moved away, carrying Destiny in her arms. Tytyl went a little way after her, waving his hand in farewell, and then walked towards the door of his own cottage.

Suddenly he remembered that there were two things which he had forgotten to ask Light—the Fairy was quite right to call him a little wool-gatherer in the first chapter—and he turned round to see if she was still there; but she was out of sight and he missed his opportunity. One of the two things that he wished to know was about Destiny: why exactly had Destiny shrunk like that, growing smaller and smaller every time they saw him? I think

that the explanation must have been that Destiny, who of course is the same as Fate, or Doom, or our appointed lot, makes slaves of those who believe in him and call him their king or ruler and allow him to sway their actions. But, as soon as any one follows Light, that is to say, the light within him, the light of his reason or his will, and defies Destiny, then Destiny plays a smaller part in his life and shrinks and shrinks and loses all his power.

The other thing was this: what had become of all the gold that Tytyl had collected from the Miser? For, as far as we have seen, there had not been anything spent on the journey. Had he been able to ask Light, her reply, I expect, would have been that the Fairy, who always had something more at the back of her mind than she let people perceive, wanted Tytyl first of all to see and study the Miser and to learn a useful lesson from him; but that she also no doubt thought it as well to borrow the money in case it should be needed; and that she had paid it back to the Miser by this time.

THE AWAKENING

CHAPTER VII

THE AWAKENING

IT was now Christmas morning in the woodcutter's cottage. Tytyl was sound asleep in his little bed in the kitchen. But the light was trickling gaily through all the crannies of the closed shutters; and the Blue Bird in his cage was singing away like mad.

There was a knock at the door.

"Who's there?" cried Tytyl, waking with a start.

"It's me!" said his mother, Mummy Tyl, behind the door. "Open the door quickly! We're expecting a visitor."

"Wait a bit, till I slip on my breeches," said Tytyl.

He jumped out of bed and saw with amazement that he was fully dressed:

"Hullo, what's this?" he said. "I've gone to bed with my clothes on! How did I come to do that?"

He opened the door; and Mummy Tyl came fussing and bustling in, carrying a bundle of sticks in her arms:

"Quick, quick!" she said. "Help me light the fire and

tidy the room. Go and wake Mytyl up. . . . They'll be here in a minute."

"Who's they?" asked Tytyl, running about and doing his best to help her.

"Why, of course, you don't know. Daddy Tyl met them yesterday, but you had gone to bed. I wish you'd open the shutters, I can't see what I'm doing."

Tytyl went and opened the shutters; and the daylight now flooded the whole room.

"And call Mytyl," said Mummy Tyl, "so that she can come and help to get things straight. . . . I never saw such a mess! And the dust! I can't let them see my house like this.

Mytyl now came in, without being called. She too was ten years older than when you last saw her in *The Children's Blue Bird* and had grown into a very pretty girl.

"Hullo, there's Mytyl!" said Tytyl. "But you haven't told me. . . ."

Mummy Tyl took no notice of his question, however, and said to Mytyl:

"There, the fire's beginning to burn up. You make

the coffee, while I start cleaning. What's this? More cabbage-leaves under the tap!"

"It's not my fault," said Mytyl. "Tylytl promised me . . ."

"Well, I never!" Mummy Tyl broke in. "A nice thing! It's a blessing that I came to look for myself! . . . Take the broom, Tylytl, while I give a rub to the plates and put them away."

"But look here," Tylytl asked again, "who's coming? Is it the Shah of Persia or the Emperor of Japan?"

"Much better than that," said Mummy Tyl. "You'll never guess. . . . Do you remember our neighbour?"

"What neighbour?" asked Mytyl.

"There aren't so many of 'em," said Mummy Tyl. "The one with the pretty little pink house, by the roadside, and a garden full of sunflowers and hollyhocks."

"Of course!" said Tylytl. "And they had a little girl to whom I gave my dove?"

"That's right," said his mother.

"They've been gone a long time."

"Five or six years, that's all," said Mummy Tyl. "They went to the town to live with the little girl's uncle."

He was a widower, with no children of his own, and has died and left them all his money. They told Daddy Tyl that they're coming back here for good, going to live in their nice little house again. It belonged to little Joy's uncle."

"Little Joy?" said Tylytyl, who did not remember.

"Yes, yes, you know: that's the little girl's name. They used to call her Jojo when she was small; but her name is Joy. Daddy Tyl met her last night, says that he would hardly believe his eyes, that she's taller than you and beautiful . . . well, there! With hair like gold, real gold! That's worth while thinking about. . . . So I want the house tidy and all of us to look decent and respectable. . . . You can never tell what may happen. We're of good stock too. Your grandfather's father was a pork-butcher."

"It's curious," said Tylytyl, "I didn't meet him."

"Meet whom?"

"My grandfather's father."

"That's not to be wondered at," said Mummy Tyl.

"He's been dead these fifty-seven years."

Tylytyl said nothing more about his journey and the

strange people whom he had met, but went on sweeping the floor lustily and asked if he had better put on his Sunday clothes.

"No, you needn't," said Mummy Tyl. "You're all right as you are. We'll just lay the white table-cloth. . . . Besides, there's no time now; they're coming; I can hear them walking up the path."

There was a knock at the door and Mummy Tyl went and opened it. The neighbour entered, with Joy; and behind them came Daddy Tyl, with his woodcutter's axe on his shoulder, calling out merrily:

"Here they are! Here they are!"

"Yes, it's Joy and I, Madame Tyl," said the neighbour. "Good-morning, a Merry Christmas and good luck to one and all, as my poor dear husband used to say when he was alive. I'm glad to see you looking so well. . . . And are these the children? Don't tell me that this great big, pretty girl is Mytyl? And can that be Tytyl, that strapping young fellow, who looks so smart?"

"Yes, yes, Madame Berlingot," said Mummy Tyl, "they're the sort that keep on shooting up till you don't

know where you are. Tyltyl hasn't grown so much as his sister; but he's stronger. There's not a sturdier lad in all the country-side. . . . But it's your young lady who's beautiful! She looks the very picture of the blessed saints! . . . Now then, Tyltyl," she went on, when she saw him standing wide-eyed and entranced, "where are your manners? Don't you know your little playmate? Be civil, say how-do-you-do, shake hands and give her a chair."

"Before you sit down," said Daddy Tyl to Neighbour Berlingot, "would you like to see the cows?"

"What, do you keep cows now?"

"Why, yes; we haven't done so badly either. Two little cows and a calf. Little cows are better than big ones; and they only eat half as much. One of them, the red one, gives us twenty quarts of milk every day."

"Then you've put up a cow-house?" asked Neighbour Berlingot. "You hadn't one before."

"Yes, I ran it up myself," said Daddy Tyl, "with Tyltyl here to help me. Suppose we go and look at it now. We made a good job of it; and it's worth seeing."

He led the way to the door; and everybody went out

"Is it . . . IS IT REALLY YOU?" HE SAID
"YES, IT'S I", SAID JOY



to see the new cow-house, except Tytyl and Joy, who were left standing face to face. As soon as they were gone, Tytyl went up to Joy and took her hand:

"Is it . . . is it really you?" he said, in the same words as the smallest of them all.

"Yes, it's I," said Joy.

And you will have guessed by this time that Joy was no other than the Veiled Girl of Tytyl's dream.

"I knew you at once," he said.

"And I you."

"You are even more beautiful than up there."

"You too."

"I say, it's funny that I couldn't remember," said Tytyl.

"I hadn't forgotten," said Joy.

"Oh, how lovely you are! . . . May I kiss you?" asked Tytyl.

"You may if you like," said Joy.

And they kissed each other, a little awkwardly, perhaps, but fondly.

"They haven't a suspicion!" said Tytyl.

"Do you think that?" asked Joy.

"I'm sure of it. They don't know what we know. But the little ones know."

"What little ones?"

"The little ones up there. They were very clever. They knew you at once. . . . Were you so very unhappy?"

"Why?"

"Because I couldn't remember."

"It wasn't your fault."

"I know," said Tyltyl, "but I hated it. And you were so pale, so dreadfully pale; and you never spoke. . . . How long had you loved me?"

"Ever since I first saw you, when you gave me the Blue Bird."

"And I have loved you ever since; but I had forgotten. . . . Never mind: we're going to be tremendously happy, for they've settled it, they wanted it."

"Do you think they've done it on purpose?" asked Joy, shyly.

"I'm quite sure; there isn't a doubt. Everybody wanted it, but especially the little ones, all six of them."

"Oh!" said Joy.

"Yes! . . . We're going to have six! Do you believe it?"

"Six what?"

"Why, six children of course!"

"Oh, Tyltyl!" said Joy.

"I know it's a great many; but we'll manage somehow. There's nothing to be afraid of. . . . But what a dream, eh?"

"Yes."

"The loveliest I ever had; and you?"

"Yes."

"I saw you as you are now, just like that. But here, all the same, you are more real and more beautiful. . . . Oh, I must kiss you again!"

They kissed once more; and at that moment Daddy Tyl opened the door and caught them in the act. The others were just behind him.

"Well, I never!" said Daddy Tyl. "You're getting on, you two! You're losing no time!"

"What's the matter?" asked Neighbour Berlingot, coming in with Mummy Tyl and Mytyl.

"What did I tell you, when we were looking at the rab-

bits? These two are just made for each other. They were kissing away like anything!"

"Joy!" said Neighbour Berlingot, shocked. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

"But, mummy," Joy began to explain.

"Come, come," said Daddy Tyl, "there's no great harm in it. We did as much, Mummy Tyl and I, when we were young, didn't we, old lady?"

"We did indeed!" said Mummy Tyl. "They look such a pretty pair."

And she felt very glad at the thought of her son's making such a good match.

"They do," said Madame Berlingot. "But Joy is still very young; and I should like to think it over."

"That's right enough," said Daddy Tyl. "He's very young too; but you won't find a better boy in the whole country-side. He's a strong, healthy lad, with a civil tongue in his head for everybody, and he works like a nigger. . . . Think it over by all means, only as this is Christmas Day, there's no harm in their giving each other a kiss. Let's see them do it!"

But Tylyl and Joy seemed to have grown shy and did not move.

"Well?" said Daddy Tyl, pushing them closer together. "Look at them! They don't want to now!"

Then Tylyl kissed Joy, but whispered:

"It was better when we were by ourselves, wasn't it?"

"Yes, it was!" whispered Joy.

"They were right, weren't they?" asked Tylyl in Joy's ear.

"Who?"

"The others, up there."

"Yes," said Joy.

"Hush!" said Tylyl. "Don't say a word to any one: it is our secret, yours and mine."

